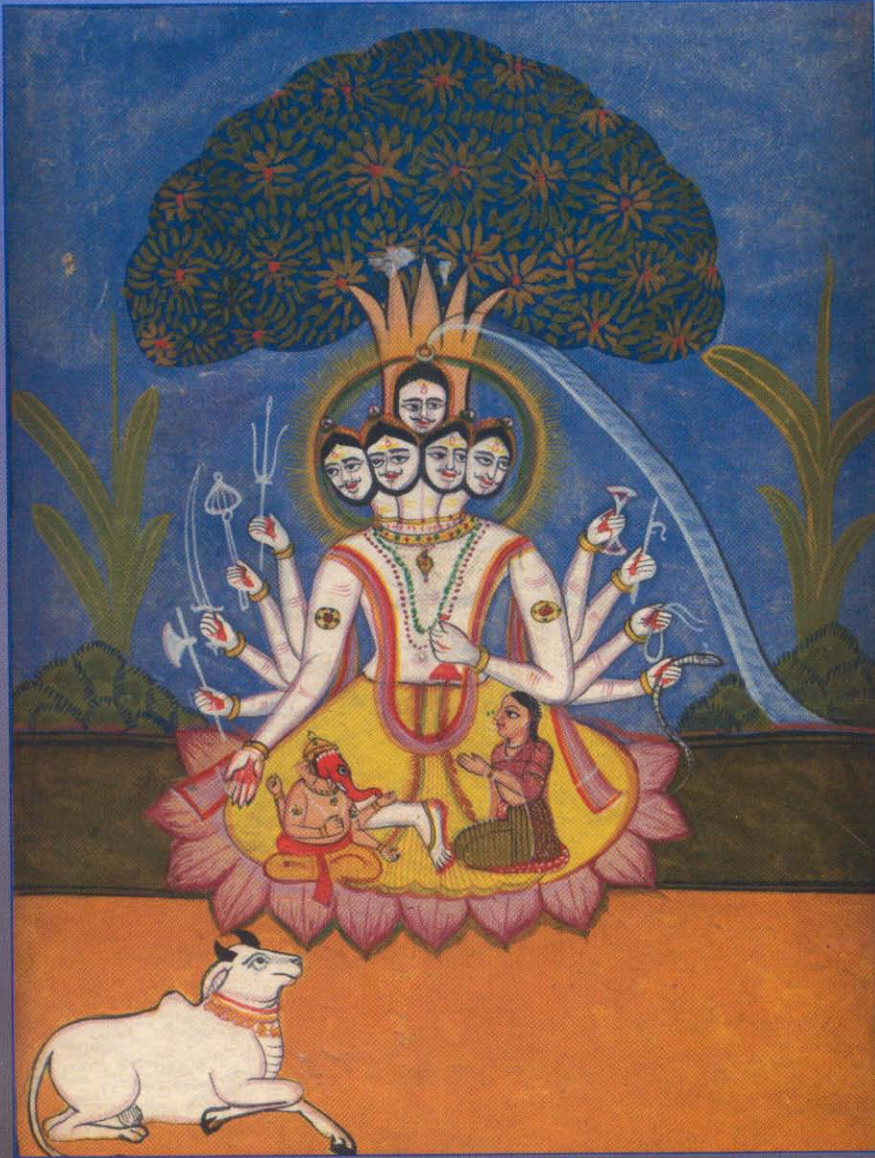


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forum on indian representations 4:1&2 (2006)



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ABHINAVAGUPTA: RECONSIDERATIONS

EDITED BY

MAKARAND PARANJPE
SUNTHAR VISUVALINGAM

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Foreword

Makarand Paranjape

LONG IN THE MAKING, this volume, consecrated to Abhinavagupta and named after him, is meant to remind us of a magnitude of accomplishment and a legacy of thought, which, though so crucial, even central to India's intellectual traditions, is still not as familiar as it ought to be, not only to the laity but also to scholars and students. Compared, for instance, with Shankara, Abhinavagupta is almost a stranger to most of us. His name, Abhinavagupta, which, as he himself states in *Tantraloka* (8: 50), was given to him by his gurus, but later writers refer to him as "Abhinavaguptapada." "*Pada*," though an honorific, means feet, which when added to *gupta* gives us the compound, "*guptapada*" – hidden feet – in other words, a snake. The full name thus means new (*abhinava*) snake, or as G. T. Deshpande suggests, a new incarnation of *shesha*, the serpent. Deshpande then says that since Patanjali the grammarian was said to be an incarnation of *shesha*, Abhinavagupta, who was also skilled in grammar, could be thought of as a new incarnation of Patanjali. He offers an even more farfetched theory when he says that Abhinavagupta was so called because the very sight of him made other students as fearful as when they saw a snake (14). Whatever be the case, we know more about Abhinavagupta than of many other scholars, philosophers, sages, and authors of India, most of whom remained largely anonymous. We not only know that his father was Narasimhagupta or Chukhulaka but also that his mother was Vimalakala and that he was born in the second half of the tenth century CE, probably between 950 and 960.

The names of his teachers are mentioned in his writings: Narasimhagupta, his father, for grammar;

Vamanatha for Dvaita Tantra; Bhutiraja for Brahavidya; Bhutirajatanaya for Dvaitadvaita Shaivagama; Lakshmanagupta for Krama and Trika Darshana; Bhatta Induraja for Dhvanyaloka; Bhatta Tauta for dramaturgy; and Shambhunatha for Kaulagama. From his other works we know that he had an active scholarly career of more than twenty-five years during which he composed at least forty important works. These include five works on Sanskrit poetry and poetics, commentaries on and expositions of the Tantras, poetic compositions explaining Kashmir Shaiva philosophy, and a commentary on the *Bhagavad-gita*. K. C. Pandey in his book *Abhinavagupta* lists the more-than-nine-hundred sources and authors that Abhinavagupta refers to in his various works. This shows not only the extent and depth of his studies but also leaves behind an invaluable guide to students of later times trying to reconstruct the history of Indian thought.

Following the conquest of Kashmir by Muslim invaders and the end of the system of patronage that supported the kind of scholarship that Abhinavagupta represented, there was not only a rupture in the intellectual activities that prevailed, but also a definite shift in their emphasis. The classical world of Sanskrit knowledge, with its openness and liberalism, was snuffed out after this last great flash of effulgence. The centre of medieval scholarship moved to Banaras, which, embattled as it was, came to be the stronghold of a kind of orthodoxy and narrow-mindedness that was alien to the ancients. The eclipse of Kashmir Shaivism and the culture that

supported it also coincided, in many ways, with the closing of the Hindu mind. Even today this mind remains only partially reopened. In Sanskrit and Philosophy departments round the country, Abhinavagupta is scarcely taught. When he is, it is only with reference to his aesthetic theories and commentaries. At the very least, he needs to be integrated into the syllabus. But that would mean the long overdue radical overhauling of our intellectual history, which totally marginalises the Tantras, among other branches of study that deserve to be revived.

Having said this, it would be too ambitious, even foolish to claim that the purpose of this special issue of *Evam* on Abhinavagupta is to restore his rightful place in India's intellectual traditions or in the evolving larger cosmopolitan configurations of human thought. We know that this is impossible to attempt in slim, even slight collections of essays of this sort. But behind the more modest attempt of showcasing some fine scholarship on Abhinavagupta is the more profound aspiration, even intention, that something of the nature of a fundamental reconsideration of Indian thought, especially of Abhinavagupta's contribution to it, might begin to happen or at any rate *needs* to happen, sooner than later. Just as every school boy or girl in the West knows something of Plato or Aristotle, we hope that one day their counterparts in India will know of Shankara and Abhinavagupta, among other heroes and heroines in the arenas of the mind. We are also proud that this collection is graced by some of the greatest names in

the field of Sanskrit scholarship and philosophy, including the late K. Krishnamoorthy, D. H. Ingalls, B. K. Matilal, and Jaideva Singh.

This volume would not have been possible without the passion and commitment of the guest co-editor, Sunthar Visuvalingam. Sunthar's PhD at Banaras Hindu University was on "Abhinavagupta's Conception of Humor," but in the years that followed, he embarked upon what he terms "a full-scale investigation into the vantage point of transgressive sacrality for deciphering first the Hindu tradition and now the other world religions." Sunthar's efforts in this domain are evident in his website, www.svabhinava.org. Many of the essays in this volume were first posted there. The website also hosts lively debates on a wide variety of topics pertaining to Indian thought, especially aesthetics, cognitive philosophy, Tantra and so on.

Several of these are papers were first presented at two conferences on Abhinavagupta held at the Musicology Department of the Banaras Hindu University in 1981 and 1982 respectively. The late Professor Premlata Sharma took the initiative and received funding from the University Grants Commission, New Delhi. Sunthar was subsequently entrusted with the publication of these papers in three separate volumes on Aesthetics, Philosophy and Religion. More than twenty years later, some of these essays are finally being published. They have now assumed a historical and cultural significance beyond their immediate context partly because some of their

authors are no more on this earth and also because their stature has grown, not diminished, with their passing.

Sunthar's exertions on Abhinava are far from over. His life-work is very much inspired by his study of the writings of Abhinavagupta, indicative of the great "hidden" (*gupta*) treasure of India that the world now claims as its own. His website is therefore more than a passive mirror reflecting Abhinava's thought – it is an evolving multi-faceted dialogue spanning the millennium not only between Sunthar and Abhinava, but between each one of us (*sva*) and the universal promise of his ideas. That is why Sunthar prefixes the site with the letters *sva*, suggestive of his own initials, S. V., but also of his attempt to make Abhinavagupta our very own, *sva*, so full of symbolic possibilities of re-construction (*pace* Derrida). Indeed, more than an attempt to conserve and systematise received traditions, Abhinavagupta's commentaries, Sunthar believes, radically *re-new* (*abhi-nava*) our understanding of our traditions by illuminating their apparent obscurities and contradictions with fresh insights that Abhinavagupta did not even bother to claim as his own (*sva*-). Therefore, the highest tribute we could pay to Abhinavagupta is to make him our contemporary, that is, to re-new him in the light of our own understanding.

The broader project of *Evam* is precisely to engender a wider understanding of Indic traditions so that the world-wide community of scholars and students trying to grapple with the significance of human life and thought can reshape the legacy of India in their

own individual and collective light. Abhinavagupta can perfectly illuminate such a quest because he sought the beautiful, the good, and the true, these concerns converging so auspiciously in his writings into the unifying spiritual insight (*pratibha*) that can still sustain us. For not only was Abhinavagupta India's greatest authority on aesthetics, but his discerning connoisseurship of the arts is informed by acute conceptual analysis and profound compassion for the welfare of the world. On the other hand, he unravels and plays upon the subtlest philosophical notions with a conversational lightness and dexterity possible only in a spirit that has imbibed their very essence. And beneath it all, he fathoms the Tantric depths of our animal nature with a purity of intention that redeems and widens his and our own humanity.

Sunthar jokes that were Abhinava alive today, he would be studying at the feet of the masters of every extant religious tradition, identifying himself even with those primitive Bhairavas who had never become literate enough to write down their experiences. We would have seen him whizzing past on our highways and by-lanes, transgressing man-made speed barriers, into the depths of Andalusia intent on re-discovering the secrets of peaceful co-existence and cultural co-operation once enjoyed by the children of Abraham. We might have caught a glimpse of him seated closest to the exit at a Harvard seminar-hall barely enduring another boring lecture by a speaker without *anubhava*, or shaking his head with amusement sauntering through the

Chicago Art Institute. We would have certainly overheard him polemicising in the vernacular, just like the learned buffoon of the Sanskrit theatre, amidst fellow bohemians in the intellectual capitals of the world. We might have bumped into him wandering the red-light district of Paris looking around for a prospective disciple of Picasso, just before he retired back into his cavernous studio to deploy his humour serenely in a chat session over the Internet exploring another as yet unmapped territory of human folly – global politics. For, as Sunthar's teacher Rameshwar Jha used to banteringly say to Swami Lakshman Joo, perhaps the last exponent of Kashmir Shaivism, Abhinavagupta, and indeed India itself, was not a disciple but a *guru*-factory! In short, Abhinavagupta would have recognised himself as we should recognise him today in the cross-fertilising multi-faceted aptitudes of all of us involved in this hydra-headed collective enterprise of figuring out the way to the deepest possible liberation and celebration of the human spirit in its widest possible dimensions.

In Sunthar Abhinavagupta has found an apt modern disciple and champion. We hope that Sunthar is able to sustain and continue his work, not only through his website but also through a sustained programme of scholarly publishing and outreach. Though the pressures of making a living in a world that is unrelentingly materialistic can be daunting, if not distracting, Sunthar has an ideal partner in his wife Elizabeth, herself an Indologist of repute. *Evam* wishes them both every success in their noble and conjoint endeavours.

To come back to Abhinavagupta is, at the least, to recognise ourselves in Abhinavagupta's own enterprise. But to do this is at once to embark on a journey, both exciting and exacting, to the core of his own realisation, which is the *chamatkara* or the miracle of *pratyabhijna* or recognition, our realisation in a flash of our own identity with our deepest selves. This is the greatest miracle because we believe with truly incredible stubbornness that we are anything but ourselves. We spend lifetimes trying to become who we already are. We forget our true nature, our *shiva*-hood, which is also our *sva*, our very own self. Paradoxically, that which makes us long for this realisation, our consciousness of difference, separation, loss, or lack, is itself the best proof that we are still and always ourselves. All the three kinds of *malas* or impurities that Shaivadvaya posits, *anava-mala*, *karma-mala*, and *mayiya-mala*, only add up to limiting our consciousness. *Avidya* or ignorance, thus, does not mean absence of knowledge, but it does mean limited knowledge. It is limited knowledge that leads to fundamental misconceptions about ourselves and the world.

Pratyabhijna or recognition is thus not the cognisance of something new. Nor is the recollection of something old. It is the coming together of *smṛiti* or memory and the newness of direct perception that produces the flash of recognition which is at once new and old. The recognition of the new as the old is what is the *chamatkara* or miracle of realisation of identity, which is always, by its very nature, a radically new experience. It is, in that sense, the

making anew of the old, the making known of what was hidden, the recognition of the identity between them both, that Abhinava's work shows us and which, indeed, his name suggests at its most earnest. Such is the novelty that we hope to induce in our reconsideration of Abhinavagupta in this volume.

What makes Abhinavagupta's teachings special is that they were based, as he himself notes while introducing the central concerns of *Tantraloka*, on a combination of his own experience, logical argument, and the authority of the Shaiva *shastras*. What makes such a model of exposition so instructive to us today is that it defies the modern notion that logical argument is incompatible with scriptural authority. The realm of inner experience is also branded subjective and therefore dismissible. What we are left with then is only logical argument and empirical or positive knowledge. This methodology tenders us only partial truths, which are unable to satisfy our soul's craving for self-knowledge. In Abhinavagupta we find an epistemological combination of inner experience, logical exposition, and knowledge of authoritative traditions, which suggests a way out of our present impasse.

Abhinavagupta himself listed the five *chihnas* or signs of a yogi (*Tantraloka* 8: 136-37). They are devotion to the Divine; the power of *mantras*; control over the elements; capacity to accomplish one's ends; and the sudden knowledge of the *shastras* or the dawn of poetic afflatus. That these powers or *siddhis* were present in Abhinavagupta is attested to by no less an authority than

his chief commentator Jayaratha (Deshpande 19). According to legend, Abhinavagupta was *yoginibhu*, born of a yogini. Who were these yoginis? Were they bloodthirsty flying goddesses as some modern Western scholars have tried to argue or were they forces of our consciousness that manifest when they are needed, either in human or supra-human form? Whatever be the case, Abhinavagupta did accomplish a great task in his life: besides all his scholarly attainments, he is also said to have reached the stage of *Bhairava*, which is the equivalent of the state of *jivanmukta*, or those living free, in the Vedantic tradition. Legend also has it that at the

close of his life he retired into the Bhairava cave with a thousand of his disciples. On his way in, he recited the *Bhairava Stava*, which he had composed himself. He then vanished in a flash of light, never to return. Whatever the "truth" behind the legend, it would seem that Abhinavagupta and his school of thought disappeared suddenly from the horizons of Indian thought.

Sporadic, not sustained or systematic as modern Abhinavagupta scholarship has been, it has still brought this major intellectual and cultural figure back into our ken. To this growing corpus of work, *Evam* would like to add this special issue dedicated to him.

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Towards an Integral Appreciation of Abhinava's Aesthetics of *Rasa*

Sunthar Visuvalingam

I

Introduction

IN THIS OVERVIEW OF Abhinava's aesthetics,¹ I have attempted to maintain a balance between opposing constraints:

- focus on making the core insights accessible to educated laymen interested in aesthetics even while judiciously introducing technical Sanskrit terminology that has no equivalent in non-Indian languages (also to satisfy the trained Indologist intent on recognising what is being "translated");
- provide sufficient historico-cultural context to clarify the specific expression they found in

¹ The first part of this essay was originally presented to the Indic Colloquium (July 2002) and has since been published in Spanish in *Sarasvati* (7 [May 2004], Madrid). The second part on "universalisation" – an abstract (of a paper yet to be) written for the World Association of Vedic Studies (WAVES) conference in 2002 – nicely complements the preceding overview. They are both being published here in print for the first time in English (as a combined essay). All clarifications of a technical and "Indological" nature have been relegated to the footnotes so as to ensure that the flow of ideas remains uninterrupted for the non-specialist audience. For further post-publication developments of (the latter part of) this essay, check <http://www.svabhinava.org/abhinava/Sunthar-integral/default.htm>. Please post your comments and queries regarding the contributions to this volume to the Abhinavagupta forum (where many of the theses in this essay have been already debated): <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Abhinavagupta>. I thank Rajiv Malhotra and Tenzin Robert Thurman for having invited me to the Indic Colloquium at Menla (New York state), where I also got to know Makarand Paranjape, who has assumed the daunting challenge of publishing this ongoing series on "The Synthesis of Indian Culture." Many of the scholars with whom I had the privilege of exchanging ideas, there at Menla, have since joined the Abhinava forum (which now stands at more than five-hundred members). A no-strings-attached grant of ten thousand dollars from the Infinity Foundation facilitated my taking time off to prepare this volume, most of all for the varied research and exchanges that have gone into this essay. I am most grateful to Felix and Aurora Ilarráz for their steadfast friendship and generous support over the last two decades. I dedicate this essay to my dear wife, Elizabeth, who introduced me to the continuing vitality of Bhairava-worship in India and Nepal, the hidden life of contemporary Benares, French intellectual (not just Indological) traditions, and has been a constant resource and inspiration for my researches.

rasa doctrine even while highlighting the universal constants in human experience that the Indian formulations are derived from and seek to address in consonance with a particular ethos;

- enable the reader to "problematise" Indian aesthetics through an account that remains faithful to Abhinava's explicit theorising even while resituating his diverse pronouncements (and person) as a whole within our evolving understanding of the tradition in relation to other cultures.
- avoid making explicit comparisons (favourable or otherwise) privileging any particular non-Indian mode of artistic expression even while facilitating such dialogue with readers predisposed to thinking about aesthetics in terms of a particular thinker, school, or (religious) tradition.

So doing, I originally formulated this overview entirely from long-term memory without consulting any primary or secondary materials (not even my own PhD thesis here at hand) on the assumption that what would take shape in this way would be rather a crystallisation of thoughts that are as much Abhinava's as they are those of a contemporary mind that has been impacted by his way of thinking in its perception of the world today.

↓ When it has been already established
by tradition,
why these pretentious claims to
originality?
When self-conscious thought blossoms so
freely on its own,
why bother to cram down these stifling
canons?
With these two objections, ever so
precious and within easy
reach,
what's then left that this world has not
turned to derision?
Climbing ever higher and higher,
knowing no repose,
the intellect finally perceives the truth of
things.
This is the reward of treading the
rungs of discrimination,
the conceptual ladder built up by
generations of forerunners.
Groping in so many directions and,
indeed, without a firm
foothold,
such I say, is our first plunge into the
ocean of certain knowledge.
Once the right path has been found and
cleared, building bridges and
founding entire cities,
such architectural feats are no cause for
wonder.
Therefore, far from having been
overturned and demolished
here,
the views of fellow truth-seekers have
been merely refined.
In the blueprints bequeathed by our
predecessors, we recognise
the foundations of this crowning
achievement of our own
labours!
Abhinava, "Voice of (Rejuvenated)
India"² (ABh 1: 280)

² Abhinavagupta's choice of the title *Abhinavabharati* for his stupendous commentary on the thirty-six chapters of Bharata's treatise on dramaturgy, the *Natyashastra*, reflects his characteristic play upon (the etymological resonances of Sanskrit) words. Bharata, its eponymous author, is just the signature left by the

Sanskrit Theatre as the Total Art Form Based on the *Rasa* Canon

Abhinavagupta's aesthetics is the culmination, in Kashmir by around the late eleventh century, of convergent developments in Indian dramaturgy, rhetoric, linguistics, epistemology, psychology, and spirituality. Drama had long been accepted as the "total" art form that united plot, acting, dance, poetry, music, architecture, fine arts, human values, and practically all other concerns of life in order to sustain and nourish an "other-worldly" (*alaukika*)

emotional enjoyment (*rasa*). Though *rasa* was also evoked by separate art forms such as (the *ragas* or "modes" of Indian) music, only in theatre was the full range of human feelings expressible in all their infinite variety and subtlety, with each emotion rendered with recognisable distinctiveness. While Bharata's theatre claimed to be modelled on the "originary" unifying principle of the solemn Vedic sacrifice³ but offered instead as a delightful spectacle to amuse all strata of Indian society,⁴ by this time the dramatic art had largely

generations of "bards" (*bharata*), who recited the epics and eventually took over the theatrical traditions. Though *bharati* is yet another term for speech, it is derived from *bharata* the ancient Vedic tribe from whom the modern Indian nation has borrowed its self-appellation. At the same time, this comprehensive and creative commentary gave an "entirely new" (*abhinava*) lease of life to the labour-intensive edifice bequeathed by Bharata's "offspring" (*bharati*), these mostly anonymous architects of Indian theatre, this mirror of the life of the people. This is what justifies the liberty I have taken, only in this invocatory context, in "translating" (the significance of) his commentary into "Abhinava's Voice of India." The original is as follows:

Āmnāya-siddhe kim apūrvam etat saṁvid-vikāśe'dhigatāgamatvam/ [= (kim)adhigatāgamatvam]
itthaṁ svayam-grāhya-mahārha-hetu-dvandvena kim dūṣayitā na lokāḥ //
urdhvordhvam āruhya yad artha-tattvam dhīḥ paśyati śrāntim avedayanti /
phalaṁ tad ādyaiḥ parikalpitānāṁ viveka-sopāna-paramparāṇāṁ //
citram nirālambanam eva manye prameya-siddhau prathamāvatāram / [read also premeya-sindhau]
tan-mārga-lābhe sati setu-bandha-pura-pratiṣṭhādi na vismayāya // [read also san-mārga]
tasmāt satām atra na dūṣitāni matāni tāny eva tu śodhitāni /
pūrva-pratiṣṭhāpita-yojanāsu mūla-pratiṣṭhā-phalam āmananti //

³ Bharata claims to have created the theatre by integrating speech from the *Rg-veda*, music from the *Sama*, acting from the *Yajur*, and emotion from the *Atharva Vedas*. The "superhuman" (*apauruṣeya*) *Rg-vedic* "revelation" regularly invokes a (often *soma*-inspired) poetic inspiration that exploits a wide variety of intricate tropes (even to the point of unintelligibility); the *Sama Veda* is sung according to strict musical rules and its status is reflected in Abhinava's distinction between the ritualistic *gandharva* and the profane *dhruva-gana* (see note 81); the "preclassical" brahmanical ritual likewise admitted of "popular" performances, as exemplified by the festivities of the Mahāvratā, and the execution of the paradigmatic classical sacrifice may itself be interpreted as a hieratic form of theatre. The "conservative" tendency and many of the cultural "idiosyncrasies" of the "Sanskrit" theatre – as exemplified above all by the "stereotyped" character of the *vidushaka* (clown) – become more intelligible when this "lip service" to Vedic ideology is taken at its word.

⁴ Huizinga had identified play and the sacred on the basis of their formal similarities, going so far as to derive the sacred itself from play. Caillois, criticising him, has stressed the doubly profane character of play when viewed in terms of its contents, intention, and the attitudes of the participants involved. In the "Veda of Dramatic Representation" (*natya-veda*) as the "plaything" (*kridaniyakam*) of all the levels of Hindu society, the comic *Vidushaka* would have been the privileged locus for the exteriorisation of the structures and

outgrown its ritual framework, narrowly defined, to carve out for itself in both theory and practice a specifically aesthetic domain, epitomised by *rasa*, that could be wholly endorsed by "heterodox" ideologies and even by a purely "secular" temperament.⁵ The challenge then, as it still remains now for Western thought, was to clarify the distinct nature of such "dramatised" emotion (*rasa*) in terms of its rootedness in the psychology of everyday life even while accounting for its radical transformation in art.⁶ Moreover, what is the role of language in the evocation

of the aesthetic response, particularly in the imaginative context of poetry? Anandavardhana's theory of "suggestion" (*dhvani*), even while developing and exploring the communication of factual (*vastu*) and figurative (*alamkara*) meanings, revolves around *rasa* (*-dhvani*) as the ultimate meaning of poetic speech. However, if *rasa* is simply a "subjective" psychological response on the part of the connoisseur to the "objective" meaning of a verse, surely the former cannot be rightfully said to be the "meaning" of the linguistic utterance.⁷ If you get upset with me for

hidden significations of the sacred before a profane audience intent on enjoying an aesthetic spectacle far removed from the mundane concerns of life.

⁵ We see a similar development of Greek theatre, both tragedy and comedy, from sacrificial origins into an art-form that could be appreciated by all citizens in terms of primarily aesthetic criteria. In both traditions, however, such sacrificial notations have been scrupulously and systematically retained and elaborated beneath the surface of the plot and dialogue. For example, "The Little Clay Cart" (*Mricchakatika*), a "worldly" romance with "realistic" themes drawn from urban life (*prakarana*), is entirely structured by the Vedic sacrificial ideology. Whereas Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, drew a line after Sophocles to take his successor, Euripides, severely to task for "deconstructing" the true spirit of Greek theatre and conception of man, it seems to me that the latter (like Aristotle in philosophy?) was rather attempting to maintain as much of the traditional as was humanly possible in the relentless face of the emerging "critical" mentality.

✓ ⁶ I. A. Richards' "synaesthesia" is one such attempt by Western psychology, unsuccessful because it is obliged to conceive the aesthetic experience as the mutual neutralisation of our precarious balance among opposing emotional tendencies so as to cancel out real-life behavioural responses. Such a "laughable" (= bisociative) theory fails to account for the distinctiveness of our enjoyments of different emotional textures (*rasa*) and, even much less, of their inner fluctuations (*vyabhicharin*). While "Sanskritists" (being one apparently makes you an authority on all things Indian) persist in demonstrating their superior intelligence by debunking the ("contradictions" of) Indian knowledge systems – often thereby betraying their ignorance of corresponding issues in their own culture – Western specialists in the relevant disciplines have begun to look here for ways out of their own theoretical and practical impasses; see Patrick Colm Hogan, "Toward a Cognitive Science of Poetics: Anandavardana, Abhinavagupta, and the Theory of Literature" (in this volume).

✓ ⁷ Marie Claude Porcher's lengthy paper on "Linguistic and Aesthetic Categories in Dhvani Theory: On the Relation between Figures of Speech and Suggestion" (in French, *Indologia Taurinensia* 10 (1982): 257-80), argues that Ananda had actually confused the ("linguistic") meaning of the poem with the aesthetic (i.e., "psychological") response that the apprehension of this meaning evokes in the connoisseur. Sheldon Pollock, for his part (see note 28 below), argues on the contrary that the presumed suggested meaning is often arbitrary and, ultimately, conditioned by the social norms and idiosyncrasies – largely unconscious for they were rarely explicit and never adequately theorised – of the enveloping cultural order. What I'm attempting to show here is that *rasa* itself actually constitutes the aesthetic meaning which presupposes

not making sense here, surely your anger can't be the meaning of what I said!

Aesthetic Identification: the Life of *Rasa-dhvani*

Emotions in real life are largely within the sway of the laws of psychological causation: certain events or actions by others provoke a specific emotional response that I express through characteristic, often visibly recognisable, physiological reactions, effects that can in no way be construed as the "meaning" of the original actions. Moreover, my emotional state, if sustained, would also be modulated by a succession of concomittant transitory states of mind; for example, sexual attraction might express itself as a kaleidoscopic pattern of longing, trepidation, joy, jealousy, and so on. What's represented on the stage are not just the "causes" (*vibhava* = determinants) of the intended emotion but also the "effects" (*anubhava* = consequents) that they evoke in another responsive dramatic personage (*ashraya*), who displays the appropriate "transitory states of mind" (*vyabbicharin* =

concomittant). And what evokes *rasa* is the (connoisseur's attempt to restore meaning to this) configuration as a coherent whole as perceived by the mind's eye. As we "infer" the emotion in the *ashraya*,⁸ the accumulated traces (*samskara*) of the same predisposition are awakened from our own subconscious and our hearts begin to resonate (*bridaya-samvada*) with their fluctuations depicted by the *dramatis personae*. Instead of "responding" behaviourally to the transposed psychological causes, the focus is on understanding the interactions on stage by supplying the relevant emotional motivations from our own store of latent memories. *Rasa* is therefore not simply an emotional response to artistic stimuli but the inner organising principle of a distinct mode of apperception (*anuvyavasaya-vishesha*), their *raison d'être*, and very meaning. This "identification" (*tanmayi-bhavana*) is so complete that we seem to be experiencing the same emotion without any distinction of self and other.⁹ This is precisely why our whole-hearted enjoyment of Sita's beauty through the

and depends upon (a literary competence trained in) processing the text to generate pertinent suggested meanings. K. Krishnamoorthy makes this point forcefully, adducing the understanding of traditional commentators, in "Abhinava's Integral View of Aesthetic Concepts" (in this volume).

⁸ To what extent this recognition constitutes an "inference" and whether the *ashraya* too "really" feels the *rasa*, are tricky questions on account of the fact that, unlike the natural concomitance between smoke and fire, people regularly feign emotions (such as sympathy) even in real life (see note 17 below). Though the actor's imagination may succeed in invoking the corresponding emotion within from life-experience so as to better play the assumed role on stage, no participant on the stage could possibly experience the dramatic configuration as a whole as does the spectator from beginning to end. We let ourselves "infer" the emotion only because it procures us aesthetic delight, and it may be argued that, in the final analysis, it is we who project our own *rasa*-experience "back" onto the personage (*ashraya*) as opposed to the actor.

⁹ This also amounts to Abhinava's resolution of a long-standing disagreement as to the seat or locus of *rasa*: the poet, the *dramatis persona*, the actor, the audience. Given the process of de-subjectivisation (*sadharanikarana*), the *rasa*-experience, unlike its counterparts in worldly feelings, cannot be properly said even to "belong" somehow to the individual connoisseur.

eyes of Lord Rama is no stigma to Indian aesthetics.¹⁰

Universalisation of Shared Emotions in Aesthetic Relish

Through aesthetic identification, an emotional stimulus that was originally unique (*asadharana*) to a particular *ashraya* becomes in this way "generalised" (*sadharani-karana*) into an object of relish for the spectators at large, who experience the corresponding *rasa* (e.g., *sringara* = love) in an "impersonal" mode in the sense of its being not conditioned by an ascertainment of the form "I am in love" (which would result in a purposive attitude) or "he/she is in love" (which would leave one indifferent). Worldly (*laukika*) emotion immediately

engenders a stream of cogitation, impelled by a purposive attitude towards the external stimulus, which sustains the feeling of self as distinct from other. The choice is between a "personal" interest and the withdrawal of attention due to indifference or other more insistent matters. In the aesthetic context, the emotion, even while being nourished and intensified by the evolution of the artistic configuration, is arrested at the initial (i.e., pre-discursive) stage of development¹¹ because the sustenance (and not just the "production") of *rasa* depends on keeping the attention focussed (*avadhana*) on restoring coherence to the "conjunction of determinants, consequents, and concomitants" (Bharata's famous axiom on *rasa*).¹²

¹⁰ Considering the real-life infatuation that actors (Amitabh Bacchan, M. G. Ramachandran, now Shah Rukh Khan) and actresses (Aishwarya Rai and, more recently, Gayatri Joshi in *Swades*) can evoke in their fans, it is worth noting that the shared enjoyment of the heroine (*nayika*), even vicariously in theatre, posed a dilemma to the Indian ethical consciousness. This ingenious concept of *tanmayibhavana* removes the moral compunction even while sanctioning the unreserved sensuous delight. Considering that the (often royal) hero (*nayaka*), presided by Indra, actually assumes the role of the sacrificer, the (male) audience (at least) participates through this same identification in the play as sacrifice. The net result of the above processes is that we have N. T. Rama Rao voted in with a thumping "democratic" majority as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, and Arnold Schwarzenegger as Governor of California, the main difference being that the former played Lord Rama in Telugu movies, whereas the latter has won fame as the Hollywood *Terminator*. Similarly, Jayalalithaa, the controversial Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, was formerly MGR's *nayika* on the Tamil screen and surviving companion in real-life.

¹¹ A successful production, even the musical exposition of a *raga*, does indeed systematically diversify, consolidate, explore, and intensify the distinctive *rasa*, often culminating in an emotional climax rarely experienced in the "real" world. Abhinava's qualification "initial" (*pramukha*) here means simply that this shared elaboration is entirely determined by (our "self-surrender" to the enchantment exercised by) the "art-work" as opposed to discursive thought on our part, for such "subjectivity" would rather be the cause of "breach of *rasa*" (*rasa-bhanga*)

¹² The dynamic tension underlying this cognitive structure assumes a special significance when viewed in the light of the tantric dictum that the awareness of the relation between subject and object is common to the perception of all embodied beings; what distinguishes the adept is the discriminating attention focussed on the relation itself (*sambandhe savadhanata*). In the aesthetic setting, this attention comes effortlessly and "unselfconsciously" to the subject hankering after *rasa*; for it to be sustained in the midst of worldly experience, however, presupposes a cultivated insight into the nature of consciousness and an effort of directed will.

Though Bharata states that the "basic emotion" (*sthayi-bhava*) "becomes" the *rasa* through the action of these three elements, Abhinava clarifies that what is really experienced is only the *rasa*, and it is only through analogy that it is appropriate to identify it with the corresponding worldly emotion.¹³ As darkness envelops the galleries of our mundane day-to-day consciousness, such rapt attention is rendered possible by our voluntary suspension of purposive attitudes (*artha-kriya-karitva*) in favour of an intentness to enjoy whatever the spotlight of a receptive consciousness reveals before us. This "catharsis" that purifies the emotions from their biological inertia and self-centeredness is

also, paradoxically, what renders the experience of *rasa* all the more intense and enjoyable.¹⁴ Whereas our mundane psychology is characterised by a flow of ideation driven and buffeted by instinctual needs that are often below the surface, and corresponding efforts of reason to negotiate and escape their thralldom, *rasa* is willingly evoked and sustained by the combined faculties of the discriminating intellect, thereby achieving the reconciliation of thought and emotion that constitutes culture. The spectacle thus also creates and reinforces a psychic bond among the "participating" community even as had Greek tragedy or the sacrificial ritual.¹⁵

¹³ Neuroscience now distinguishes between instinct, emotion, and sentiment. Instinct would refer to the biological reflexes (aggression, sex, fear, disgust) rooted in the genetically programmed propensity of an animate being to preserve and perpetuate itself. Emotion would refer to the various corporeal (chemical, nervous, etc.) changes engendered by the operation of such instincts in response to an immediate context and to maintain an internal equilibrium. Damasio claims that even the simplest organisms are subject to the rudimentary equivalents of our basic emotions, like fear, with the palette becoming richer and more complex as we ascend towards humanity. Sentiment is distinguished, in this evolutionist perspective, by the integrated mapping of the experience of such emotions in relation to their external causes – evoking the memory of past patterns and future projections – onto the general psycho-somatic state as a whole. Manifesting already somewhat in higher animals (birds, dogs, apes), sentiment is hence characterised by "self-awareness" and implies an increasing degree of "freedom" from the automatism of the body, finding its culmination in the subjective human consciousness, where such cognitive autonomy is mirrored in language. *Rasa* would correspond, in this schema, to the evocation of such "sentiment" in a specifically aesthetic mode that intensifies self-awareness. Bharata's *sthayibhava* – which includes such "instincts" as enterprise (and even cessation) – is thus already an eminently cultural construct that has been "retrofitted" onto our biological inheritance.

¹⁴ It might be noted that there have been two different interpretations of Aristotle's *katharsis*: as the purification of emotions (such as fear and horror) from the spectators (of the tragedy), or rather as the purification (with ritual overtones?) of these emotions themselves, the latter understanding being closer to the Indian (account of the) experience of *rasa*.

¹⁵ The chief spectator of the Greek play was the priest of Dionysus, from whose sacrificial cult the Attic theatre emerged. A fundamental difference would be that tragedy depicted violence (hence horror and fear, see note 14 on *katharsis* above) before an Athenian polis of indigenous males, who were in principle equals, whereas (the depiction of) death was prohibited in the classical (brahmanical sacrifice and) Indian theatre that served to mirror and hold together, in its self-representation, a diverse and hierarchised (caste-) society. The tragic hero has been derived from the ritual scapegoat just as the *vidushaka* from the deformed brahmin "sin-eater" of the Ashvamedha.

Rasa is Ultimately Reflexive Consciousness Mediated by Emotion

Rasa is hence not the psychological "effect" that the artistry "produces" in us but rather the (source and) inner organising principle of the aesthetic creation, its very meaning.¹⁶ We do not particularly relish the emotions of others inferred in real life, so the aesthetic emotion cannot be reduced to the *rasa* merely deduced in the *ashraya* (it's irrelevant whether the actor is really feeling that or any emotion).¹⁷ The dramatic spectacle does not simply "intensify" our worldly emotions, for we

would otherwise never lose an opportunity to fall into a fit of psychopathic anger or wallow in suicidal depression.¹⁸ Nor is stagecraft an illusion, for we do not mistake the objective configuration for something else, but rather reorganise the sensory data through an active apperception (*anuvyavasaya*) focussed on the enjoyment of *rasa*.¹⁹ For the same reason, it's not an imitation,²⁰ as the simultaneous (bisociated) perception of the imitated and the imitating element can only amount to caricature provoking

¹⁶ The meaning of a love poem (by Amaru) is (our enjoyment of) the erotic sentiment (*shringara*), in all its rich inner differentiation, whereas the word "love" denotes no more than the idea of this emotion, which would rather short-circuit the aesthetic process. This is why Sanskrit poetics insists that *rasa* is always suggested and never to be directly expressed as "I love you." Unfortunately, this elementary point has not been grasped by Indologists, like Marie-Claude Porcher (see note 7 above), steeped in the "objectivist" linguistics of the signifier/signified.

¹⁷ This disposes (note 8) of Sri Shankuka's earlier attempt to account for *rasa* in terms of logical inference reducing it to our way of interpreting the (even unspoken) feelings of others in real life. For the same reason, the *rasa* is not "located" in the actor as would be the case of fire deduced to be burning on a hill emitting smoke. Perception, memory, inference, feeling, etc., are rather integrated here into a unique (*sui generis*) mode of (aesthetic) cognition (*pratiti, bodha*).

¹⁸ This disposes of Bhatta Lollata's earlier claim that the basic emotion, somehow intensified by the mixture of the determinants, concomitants, and consequents, is transformed into *rasa*. What remains unaccounted for from the perspective of Samkhya and other psychological frameworks derived from an "ascending" spiritual perspective is the precise working of the (tantric) "alchemy" responsible for such transmutation. See part 2 of this essay.

¹⁹ The conventional account of there having been several "schools" of *rasa*-theory based on different philosophies – Samkhya (Lollata), Nyaya (logic, i.e., Shankuka), Mimamsaka (hermeneutics, i.e., Bhatta Nayaka), Buddhist (*rasa* as stream of consciousness), Advaita-Vedanta (Jagannatha), etc. – largely misses the point. The aesthetic experience defied encapsulation within the narrow categories of any of these systems, which were formulated to conceptualise, defend, and propagate the concerns – worldly, ritual, or spiritual – of their respective discipline. What we are witnessing, rather, is the best minds coming together in an interdisciplinary effort to leverage and adapt existing categories of thought to do full justice to a shared pleasure that remained intractable to intellectual analysis. Abhinava does not reject any of these contributions; rather, he builds upon these by integrating them into a sophisticated "phenomenology" (*abhasavada*) of art. Though providing the hidden intellectual framework, the Pratyabhijna perspective is itself extended into the emotional realm and enriched in the process.

²⁰ Though Bharata's dictum that the stage is an "imitation" (*anukarana*) of the world (*loka*) is wholly true as regards its depiction of human pursuits and situations in a plausible or "life-like" manner (*vraisemblance*), the drama is not lived through as an imitation of something exterior to it.

laughter.²¹ Nor is it necessary to invoke some mysterious twin-power, inherent in the language of theatre, that would first universalise through “creative imagination” (*bhavaktva*), then “render into an object of relish” (*bhojakatva*) the otherwise private emotion.²² *Rasa* is ultimately not even an emotional object presented to consciousness, but rather a specific non-mundane (*alaukika*) mode of cognition (*bodha*, *pratiti*) that is indistinguishable from an active relishing (*asvadana*, *rasana*).²³ Since

emotions – not even love, the basis for that most delectable *rasa*, the erotic sentiment (*sringara*) – are not in themselves objects of relish, what is really being enjoyed here is the reflexivity (*vimarsha*) of consciousness as mediated and sustained by a particular emotional state.²⁴ This is why Abhinavagupta repeatedly equates *rasa* with a more fundamental and universal “aesthetic rapture” (*chamatkara*) that reveals itself in a variety of circumstances that are not artistic in the

²¹ Brahma's very first (mythical) performance of the theatre in honour of the king of the gods, Indra, was rudely disrupted by the demons (*asura*), who took offense at being (caricatured and hence) ridiculed. Since the event was intended to commemorate the annual festival of raising the Indra-pole (*maha-dhvaja*), Kuiper has rightly concluded that the theatre, enacted within an agonistic setting, must have originally had a cosmogonic significance (the Vedic New Year).

²² Though taking Bhatta Nayaka to task for inventing these supposedly separate “operations” (*vyapara*) of poetic language, Abhinava integrates both the principle of “universalisation” (*sadharani-karana*) and of delectation into (his systematic defense of) the psycholinguistics of Ananda's theory of “suggestion” (*dhvani*) that his contemporary had thereby sought to refute. The Purva Mimamsa likewise accounts for the efficacy of ritual by resorting to the unique causative power of Vedic injunctions to engender unseen fruits (*apurva*). Bhatta Nayaka's attempt to explain the peculiar emotional effect of *kavya* upon the audience through such a hermeneutics assumes a special significance in the light of the sacrificial underpinnings of Bharata's theatre.

²³ The thrust of the Pratyabhijñā epistemology is towards breaking down the opposition between categories such as action (*kriya*), knowledge (*jñana*), and conation (*iccha*); or rather, it aims to demonstrate how each is indispensably penetrated by elements of the others (hence the trident-symbolism and the name Trika (“three-based”) of the tantric system from which it draws its inspiration). Thus, whereas the Purva-Mimamsa bases itself on the supremacy of (the injunctive to ritual) action, the Uttara-Mimamsa (Advaita-Vedānta) is obliged to reject the “previous” doctrinal edifice so as to reinterpret the whole Veda in terms of the primacy (of spiritual self-) knowledge. Of course, many learned brahmins were steeped in the practice of both systems (and even dabbled simultaneously in Tantra), but theoretically the two have remained (literally) worlds apart. Abhinava is likewise deconstructing the distinction between perceiving an (aesthetic) object and (then subjectively) relishing it: “knowing” (a woman) here means “enjoying” (her).

²⁴ Discussions of the emotions based on empiricism are still invariably loaded with (culture-specific) philosophical assumptions, like Damasio's neurobiological intervention (see note 13 above) in the debate between Descartes (mind versus body opposition) and Spinoza (reduction of soul to body). I do not see how even a materialist psychology could account for our experience of an aesthetic emotion as both the same as and different from its worldly counterpart, without examining and re-conceptualising the nature of (self-) consciousness itself (see note 6 above). Though the cerebral representation of emotion – in relation to the body, the external causes, and past experience – may have been an “accident” of evolution that has improved our chances of individual (and group) survival by enabling better adapted and more sophisticated responses, artistic creation consists in reversing this finality by playfully reconfiguring these stimuli to evoke and nourish emotion simply for the pleasure of enhancing the element of self-awareness.

conventional sense, particularly in modes of "spiritualising" otherwise "worldly" experience.²⁵ Though evoked or, rather, mirrored by the emotions in the typical aesthetic context, *rasa* is ultimately an inalienable property of consciousness itself.

Suggestion, the Soul of Poetry Even Before its Late Formulation

The burden of conveying the sensory effects of the aesthetic configuration (plot, determinants, etc.) is borne in poetry (*kavya*) by language alone. What is lost in terms of the vivid but relatively passive overpowering of the eye (gesture, costume, props, etc.), and the ear (music, song, dialogue, etc.) must be compensated for by a more subtle, discriminating, and rarefied use of words that demands a correspondingly greater (re-)creative effort on the part of the hearer. The direct expression of feelings (e.g., "I love you") is in bad poetic taste

because it fails to evoke the corresponding emotion in the connoisseur. *Rasa* can only be "suggested" (*vyangya*) through the presentation of determinants, consequents, and concomitants that may themselves be merely suggested (e.g., the mutual glances of estranged lovers through averted eyes). The highest form of "suggestion" (*dhvani*) is where the poem is "dramatised" (*natyayita*) by the imagination so that all the signifying elements of sound, syntax, rhythm, rhyme, fact, figure, speaker, intonation, context, time, place, and composite sense converge on the evocation of *rasa* as the "primary meaning" (*mukhyartha*).²⁶ There are also other possibilities: the suggested meanings may be subordinated (*guni-bhuta-vyangya*) to the directly expressed sense to enrich and beautify the latter; there might be an interplay of figures of speech, some literal and others merely suggested, so that they resonate together

²⁵ *Chamatkara* is also derived from the clicking sound (*chamat*) made by the tongue when we lick our lips together while relishing a dainty dish, something that would characterise the connoisseur (of wines) as opposed to a glutton (or drunkard). Though often used interchangeably (by Abhinava himself) with *rasa* in the artistic context, *chamatkara* does not specifically refer to the emotional content but to the wonderful "ever-new" freshness of its relishing.

²⁶ Hidden behind this formulation – repeated parrot-like by many Indian scholars sympathetic to the tradition but nevertheless so perplexing to Western Indologists – is an entire theory of meaning in terms of "subsidiary" (*gauna*) and "focal" (*pradhana*) "awareness" (*paramarsha*). Unlike positivist attempts to treat the problem of signification in objectivising terms as a special kind of relation that would be external to the knowing subject, Abhinava distinguishes the "signifier" (*vachaka*) as a mediator of which we are (only) subsidiarily (and not separately) aware while being focussed on (it as being merged into) the "signified" (*vachya*). The relationship between (a) word and (its) sense ("*sens*" in French carries the sense of "direction") thus becomes the exemplary paradigm for a more comprehensive theory of signification where any (emotional, etc.) "object" that is the focus of such a sustaining perceptual structure may be elevated to the rank of "final" meaning. Such meaning is typically projected away from the (indwelling) subject consciousness onto the external (drama of the) world: "when the poet is amorous, the whole world is suffused with *rasa*" (*śṛṅgāri cet kaviḥ sarvaṁ rasa-mayam jagat*). The (analogy of the aesthetic) "concoction" (*panaka-rasa*) implies that the connoisseur's relish, though keenly attuned to the unique flavour contributed by each of the varied ingredients (determinants, etc), does not perceive them independently of the indivisible (*akhanda*) experience of *rasa*.

with tantalising hints of unexpressed thoughts; the emotion itself may serve only to provide texture to a strikingly apt description or idea – there are no bounds to language! What is more, the sparing yet strategic deployment of (often carefully half-defined) poetic speech can capture, highlight, and immortalise fleeting and otherwise ineffable moods, as exemplified by the erotic verses of Amaru that Abhinava delights in dissecting to make his theoretical points.²⁷ Though there is often some indeterminacy as regards the suggested meaning, which hence admits multiple, even conflicting, interpretations of the utterance²⁸ and as

to the range of emotional nuances projected, all commentators typically agree on the principal *rasa*.²⁹ The theory of *dhvani* as an additional third power of language, over and above direct and figurative meaning, was propounded only in the tenth century, but the illustrations cataloguing its diverse possibilities were largely drawn from the classical poets (like Kalidasa) and from verses in the vernacular. Though this “theorising” of prior implicit criteria and techniques was to counter the inordinate (and often flamboyant) resort to the mechanical aspects of the poet’s craft such as figures of speech to the detriment of good taste, it enabled the

²⁷ The best that translation can do is to convey some of the key mechanisms, overall import, and flavour of the verse, along with a perceptive commentary that clarifies how each linguistic element of the original has contributed to the total effect. It therefore takes determined and repeated effort on the part of the foreign reader confident of being eventually rewarded with unique pleasures. See Daniel H. H. Ingalls, “Some Problems in the Translation of Sanskrit Poetry” (in this volume). Several of these suggestive verses along with Abhinava’s insightful comments on how they illustrate various technical principles enunciated by Ananda have been analysed in my PhD thesis to demonstrate the bisociative structure and exploitation of humour in Sanskrit love poetry. See chapter 8, <http://www.svabhinava.org/HumourPhd/Thesis-08/default.htm>.

²⁸ This is precisely why *rasa* could never be the psychological response to an exclusively linguistic object but is itself the ultimate meaning of the poem (see note 16 above). The rhetorician Mammata starts by showing how the simple statement “the sun sets,” can in real life suggest a virtually unlimited number of meanings to different listeners. The poetic context not only reduces the range of possible meanings, but enriches whatever remains by directing the hermeneutic effort along (largely pre-established) aesthetic expectations. Analysing and comparing the conflicting interpretations of certain illustrative verses by Anandavardhana and subsequent exponents of *dhvani*, Sheldon Pollock, in “The Social Aesthetic and Sanskrit Literary Theory” (in this volume), argues that this uncertainty as to the “real” meaning is indicative of non- (and infra-) linguistic factors at work that the theoreticians were themselves unaware of largely because they were so deeply embedded in the value-constructs of the surrounding culture. Every art-form is entirely conditioned by shared conventions both social and aesthetic that have to be either assimilated tacitly by those native to the culture, or self-consciously learned by outsiders. To appreciate the checkered artistic evolution of even a single genius, like Picasso, requires unlearning a whole set of perceptual constraints – at the rupture of each period – to put on a new pair of tinted glasses.

²⁹ Lack of precision (*asphutatva*) as to the *rasa* being depicted constitutes a recognised flaw in poetry, which does not imply that nuances of interpretation and even deliberate ambiguity, especially with regard to the transitory emotions, are to be avoided. Indeed, the perennial appeal of a poetic “pearl” (*muktaka*) often consists precisely in the exploitation and cultivation of such indeterminacy through sparing brush-strokes. The humour in Sanskrit love-poetry depends on key elements to simultaneously provoke opposing affects.

explicit articulation and application of these hitherto "tacit" principles to practical literary criticism.³⁰

Painting the World with Musical Colours: the Ineffability of *Rasa*

The indeterminacy at the heart of *dhvani* extends also to the recognition and enjoyment of *rasa*, in the sense that without the human drama enacted on stage (or on the screen) and imaginatively recreated by poetry it may be difficult, even impossible, to identify the specific feeling evoked by a painted scene, a frozen sculpture, or a wordless

melody. Though we all seem to share certain basic and distinctly recognisable feelings – no doubt corresponding to dosed proportions of hormonal secretions and modes of nervous excitation within the parasympathetic system – even independently of external cues, the very definition of an "emotion" in real life, it may be argued, is not only determined from the beginning through its being universally informed by typical patterns of external situations, but also further crystallised in the aesthetic taxonomy and historical sedimentation of the surrounding culture.³¹ In this twilight zone between the obscure inner

³⁰ This "new-fangled" *dhvani* theory provoked stiff resistance on all sides from proponents of other traditional disciplines (see the invocatory verses of this essay), in much the same way as did the conceptual innovations, several centuries earlier, of the grammarian Bhartrihari, whose intellectual legacy was instead taken over and reformulated by Buddhist epistemology until subsequently rehabilitated and reclaimed by the Kashmiri Shaivas. Ananda drew his inspiration for the sudden and intuitive flash of suggestion, in all its integrality, from the speculations on the indivisibility (*sphota*) of meaning propounded by the grammarians. What was contested is not so much the linguistic mechanisms described by Ananda, but the questionable necessity of introducing an entirely new and additional function of language to account for the universally acknowledged experience of *rasa*, an innovation that threatened to disrupt the familiar intellectual framework that all, even mutually exclusive, existing disciplines had simply taken for granted. Some accomplished literary critics apparently remained on the sidelines, freely adopting and developing the practical insights of these advocates of *dhvani* without taking sides in this theoretical debate. Kuntaka, the best known among such contemporaries, thus subsumes *dhvani* under his own generic explanation of poetry as "crooked speech" (*vakrokti*). Abhinava's learned commentary on Ananda's *Light of Suggestion*, followed by Mammata's codification and popularisation of these tenets, is largely responsible for the hallowed position of *dhvani* theory today. Bimal K. Matilal claims, in "Vakrokti and Dhvani: Controversies About the Theory of Poetry in Indian Traditions" (in this volume; echoed by Pollock), that philosophers like Abhinava were more interested in the (psychology of the) *sahridaya* than in the poem itself (as linguistic object) is misleading. Porcher's critique of *rasa-dhvani*, which is central to – but could be taken for granted in – Ananda's "revolutionary" project, is precisely that an emotional response could not be an "objective" feature of poetic speech. Abhinava demonstrates, rather, how exactly *rasa* is the (aesthetic) meaning of the linguistic utterance as Ananda simply assumes.

³¹ The sudden visitation of permanent, overpowering, and incapacitating "apathy" (*nirveda*) may thus be valorised in traditional India as the awakening of an irresistible urge for spiritual "liberation" (*moksha*), whereas it is simply diagnosed as chronic schizophrenia in the modern West. Considering the degree to which the "individual" is in reality immersed in and shaped by social expectations, the manner in which such "world-weariness" is experienced may differ between cultures. Benares was the haven of a "gentle" madness (*masti*) even for foreigners (see note 107). The confrontation between the two perspectives is tellingly dramatised by pioneer Jeffrey M. Masson – I discovered Abhinavagupta through his work on *shanta rasa* – who became a Sanskritist because of his inner conversion to Advaita Vedanta, but eventu-

rehearsal
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experience of self and the codified external norms of culture have arisen – already from practitioners of these arts within the learned tradition – contestations of (the arbitrariness of) Bharata's fundamental distinction between eight (or nine) permanent (*sthayin*) and thirty-three transitory (*vyabbicharin*) emotions, and of the (dubious rationale underlying the) choice of particular emotions being elevated to the canonical rank of full-fledged *rasas*.³² A modern critic, even an Indian such as I, would certainly wonder how "disgust" (*bibhatsa*) could possibly

become the underlying and principal theme of an entire narrative.³³ The status of the *rasa*-canon becomes even shakier when we extend it beyond poetry to the non-verbal arts. For what relevance could the canonical scheme of nine *rasas* have for (instrumental) music, whose vast range of "modal structures" (*raga*) typically "colour" (*ranj-* from which *raga* is derived) the mind with tranquility, love whether in separation or union, pathos, ecstasy, devotion, or a combination of these,³⁴ but hardly ever with disgust, fear, anger, humour or even wonder?³⁵ Each *raga* does have its own unique personality and emotional

ally ended up as a practicing psychoanalyst to dismiss Indian mysticism as an "escapist" return to Freud's "oceanic" feeling.

³² Whereas Bhoja, the poet-king, attempted to demolish Bharata's entire edifice along these lines so as to better replace it with his own scheme of a single underlying *shringara* that would also be a form of "self-love" (*ahamkara* = "egoism"), Abhinava's public project is avowedly "conservative" in that it is aimed at preserving and affirming the continued authoritativeness of the *Natya-Veda*. Hence, he rejects *bhakti* as an independent *rasa* despite its central importance to the personality and philosophical project of Utpaladeva, the original proponent of his own doctrine of (the) "Recognition" (of the Lord). The only significant exception is his (ambivalent) endorsement of *shanta-rasa*, which had been however simply read (i.e., interpolated) into the Kashmiri recensions of the *Natyashastra*. Though Abhinava's handling of *rasa* in his Tantric writings is, by contrast, wholly "radical," it ultimately offers a more profound understanding and appreciation of Bharata.

³³ Though this is indeed what Peter Greenaway has successfully achieved with "A Cook, a Thief, his Wife, and her Lover," it is difficult to imagine how such an overtly transgressive production could have fitted into Bharata's normative scheme. The movie begins with a gang pissing on a battered victim, and includes scenes such as making love on a toilet seat and amidst the carcasses hanging in a butcher's van, transforming the body of the wife's lover into a daintily seasoned dish that the villainous husband is forced to consume, starting with the offending organ. But what is the "life-goal" (*purushartha*) promoted here within the appreciatively wincing spectators unless, perhaps, they were modern-day would-be Kapalikas (who, like the Pashupatas, are privileged butts of ridicule in the Indian farce)?

³⁴ For example, the pathetic *raga* par excellence in Carnatic music is the rare Mukhari. Sweetness characterises Mohanam, the equivalent of the Hindustani Bhupali. The energetic Natta, that often opens a Southern concert, lends itself readily to the heroic sentiment. Revati is considered the most sublime *raga* in the South, no doubt because its notes correspond to the Vedic chant. Instrumentalists improvise on (the popular composition *Raghuvamshasudha* in) the *raga* Kadhana Kutuhalam so as to highlight the element of astonishment and even humour. Preferences for particular *ragas* vary not only with individual temperament but also with the vicissitudes of one's personal and anecdotic encounters with specific recitals.

³⁵ This is a question that Thakur Jaidev Singh, the renowned musicologist of Benares, who was also a life-long student of Trika Shaivism, often posed to me with scepticism). It seems to me that Indian scholars, in

flavour whose Gestalt is (immediately) recognisable – regardless of the composition, singer, instrument, style, and so on – to connoisseurs, even if some of us may be incapable of identifying its specific notes or even recalling its name. However, the romantic mood, for example, is conveyed by so many otherwise contrasted *ragas* that *shringara* does not (sufficiently) account for their specific colourations; and conversely, many a *raga* readily lends itself to varied treatment so as to communicate several *rasas* even while retaining its distinct individuality.³⁶ But when the *raga* becomes the soul of a composition, it takes on the flesh and blood of the lyrics to suggest distinct sentiments and finely variegated nuances that the words alone would have not sufficed to capture. For the Indian singer keeps repeating the lines “polytonously” – at least to the ear attuned to the variation in *microtones*

(*sbruti*) and ornamentations – so as to derive a wide range of transient moods and delicate hues from the underlying emotional tone. The identity of these concomittants (*vyabbicharin*) becomes yet more palpable when interpreted through shifts in intonation, facial expression, bodily gesture, and rhythmic movement as in a dance-drama.³⁷ The point here is that the very ineffability of the recognisable mood conveyed by the *raga* becomes the artist's license and resource to improvise freely even while scrupulously respecting its formal and emotional structure. Despite the arbitrariness of the scenes they depict and the colourful palette of an indulgent imagination, the *raga-mala* paintings are ample testimony that these “garlands of musical modes” were very real and distinct emotional entities to the Indian palate.³⁸ Bharata's sacrosanct *rasa*-taxonomy is best understood as the

general, have become so caught up in the particulars of the traditional taxonomies that even those exposed to the critical spirit of the West are often unable to penetrate to the underlying cultural scheme. Whereas commentators of genius like Abhinava and Patanjali found ingenious ways, even subterfuges, to reconcile the letter of the authoritative text with the spirit of its underlying project, we who live in the universal age of deconstruction can go straight to the kernel.

³⁶ The renowned Hindustani vocalist, Pandit Jasraj, has attempted the remarkable feat of deliberately stretching the *raga* Bhageshri – which primarily evokes the yearning, anticipation, and joy of the romantic sentiment, even when directed towards God – to convey each of the nine *rasas* in turn. Of course, the Hindi lyrics from the *Ramcharitmanas* have made the task more feasible. Sometimes the difference is so palpable that we end up with two (or more) *ragas* sharing the same scale, for example, Darbari Kanada hovering in the lower and Adana in the upper register.

³⁷ Abhinava discusses these details in the context of the proper use of the ten “elements of the gentle dance” (*lasyanga*).

³⁸ I have resorted here to mixed metaphors drawn from the visual, gustatory, and auditory (without excluding the other) senses in order to draw attention to the synaesthetic ordering of experience fostered by *rasa* theory and practice. Indians associate a *raga* with a particular *rasa*, season (Megh and Malhar cycles with the onset of the monsoon, Bahar and Vasant with spring), time of the day (Miyan-ki-Todi with the morning), a landscape (Pahadi with the mountains or rolling foothills), and even attribute miraculous powers to certain *ragas* (Dipak to kindle fire). Despite the secondary (cultural) elaborations, the underlying taxonomy often seems to have some natural basis, as evidenced by the Western musician new to Indian music sensing

millennial reflection of a collective enterprise to harness the raw ineffability of our emotional nature within the larger project of an axiological schema governing the (otherwise unruly) drama of ("Hindu") life. Abhinava helps us extract from this traditional (and otherwise contingent) schema its hidden aesthetic principles in order to explore the universal validity of its underlying "metapsychology."

Good Taste, Bad Taste, "Hindu" Taste: the Aesthetics of *Rasabhasa*

The universal dimension of Bharata's schema is reflected in its fundamental dichotomy between pleasant and painful responses rooted in the survival instinct.³⁹ Though aesthetic relish is intrinsically amoral, the objective configurations that evoke *rasa* must be grounded in our shared experiences and

memories of the real world. Our pursuit of various life goals (*purushartha*) – (sexual) pleasure (*kama*), wealth-security-power (*artha*), socio-religious obligations (*dharma*), and salvation (*moksha*) – are translations of our basic emotional dispositions into rationalised personal and cultural values. Hence, the various opportunities, challenges, and circumstances that are presented on the stage to evoke *rasa* inevitably bring into play the questions of ethics. Powerful emotions are engendered through the conflict of values and their resolution; the personal values of the spectator unavoidably colour one's perception, impeding or facilitating this identification with the protagonists so crucial to the evocation of the intended *rasa*. Hence Indian dramaturgy aligns the four basic emotions of love (*rati* → *sringara*), aggression⁴⁰ (*krodha* →

that the rendering of Bhupala *raga* was "somehow" evocative of dawn. Miyan-ki-Malhar's association (in lyrics) – despite its structural resemblance to Darbari Kanada – with the rainy season, gravitates around the characteristic sliding of the *gandharva* note, evocative of (the uneasiness occasioned) by rolling thunder. A systematic analysis might elucidate such affinities in other *ragas*.

³⁹ Among these primary emotions, anger (*krodha*), sorrow (*shoka*), disgust (*jugupsa*), and fear (*bhaya*) are painful, whereas love (*rati*), enthusiasm (*utsaha*), surprise (*vismaya*), and laughter (*hasa*) are pleasant. Abhinava analyses each in turn to demonstrate how the pleasurable emotions necessarily contain elements of pain, and vice-versa. In chapter 4, on "Laughter and Distress," of my PhD thesis, I've attempted to demonstrate that *hasa* (the emotional basis for "humour") is actually a mutual neutralisation of pleasure and pain that finds release as pleasurable laughter (hence its allotted place in Bharata's classification of the *rasas*). It should be noted, however, that several of these emotions cannot be reduced to the survival schema of approach versus flight, either by themselves (enthusiasm, wonder, humour, and cessation) or on account of their distinctive treatment in drama and the arts, particularly in the case of love (see note 62 below).

⁴⁰ It may seem counter-intuitive, to Americans in particular, to make aggression (as opposed to enterprise) the principal goad for the pursuit of "success" in life (*artha*), and to turn a blind eye to the spirit of rivalry that often animates statesmen undertaking social projects (*dharma*). By drawing the line between *raudra* and *vira* in this manner within the continuum of human striving, Bharata is relegating the aggressive pursuit of wealth-security-power to the self-interested realm of competition and conflict (as reflected in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*), while preserving socio-religious order as the privileged arena for wholly altruistic undertakings. The most palpable manifestation of this cultural difference is that of (not just freshly ar-

raudra), enterprise⁴¹ (*utsaba* → *vira*) and quiescence⁴² (*shama* → *shanta*) with the ascending socio-religious hierarchy of the life-goals.⁴³ Though in itself transcending all (purposivity and hence) value-judgments, *rasa* is sustained by a dramatic representation that embraces

the whole spectrum of cultural values. Abhinava hence enjoins that these primary emotions should be depicted on stage so as to inculcate the proper pursuit of their corresponding life-goals. Even the subsidiary emotions indirectly contribute to this schema:⁴⁴ for example,

rived) Indian immigrants tending to experience American behaviour – even when friendly and generous – as “aggressive.”

⁴¹ But does not such “enthusiasm” permeate all human endeavours, whether courting a woman for the gratification of personal desire, the self-interested pursuit of wealth and worldly power, or even the energetic postponement of individual salvation in order to serve all beings? Such extroverted, committed, and long-sighted “enterprise” is best understood as the resolute action of the “disinterested” ego committed to the well-being of the whole. This is why Abhinava also elevates the “purified” form of “compassionate heroism” (*daya-vira*) – the underlying motivation of the (not just Buddhist) *bodhisattva* – to a possible basis of *shanta rasa*. This is yet further testimony of the degree to which (the aesthetics of) Indian “psychology” is informed by a shared axiology.

⁴² In the “orthodox” (as opposed to the Buddhist-influenced) brahmanical recension of Bharata’s schema, this slot would be occupied by “disgust” instead; and Abhinava does indeed consider “pure disgust” (*shuddha-bibhatsa*) – towards all the sensual attractions of the world – as a possible basis for *shanta rasa*. However, he admits that such “pure” forms of all the other *rasas* could also play a similar role, and we may ask why the earlier tradition privileged *bibhatsa* despite all the operational problems it poses (see note 33 above). The overriding concern for purity – the basis of the caste-system – which simultaneously aligns the classical brahmin (sacrificer) with and distinguishes him from the (heterodox) renouncer, best accounts for this unique status of disgust.

⁴³ Having arrived in Benares with a strong background in the natural sciences and, as it were, to study Indian “psychology,” I was long troubled by this fact that the *purushartha* scheme does not recognise “the pursuit of knowledge” (for its own sake) as an independent goal of life. Knowledge (*vidya*) has always been seen in instrumental terms – not just by the Purva Mimamsa reflecting the orthodoxy of Vedic ritualism – as serving worldly (*apara*) aims or the supreme (*para*) goal of spiritual liberation (where it can become synonymous with *gnosis*). Those familiar with Foucault’s discourse on the power-knowledge nexus should have little difficulty here.

⁴⁴ Bharata pairs each of these principal *rasas* with a specific subsidiary: *shringara* with *hasya*, *raudra* with *karuna* (pathos), *vira* with *adbhuta* (wonder), and *bibhatsa* with *bhayanaka* (terror). Abhinava clarifies that each of these pairs exemplifies a different mode of “causation” that may, in reality, be generalised to all our emotions. *Hasya* would be the natural result of the “semblance” (*abhasa*) of any emotion (see note 46 below); *karuna* exemplifies those evoked by the real-life consequences of the same actions that evoke the principal emotion (destructive anger); *adbhuta* typifies the class of those directly evoked in onlookers by the very actions that evoke the primary *rasa* (admiring the exemplary feats accomplished against all odds, instead of simply identifying ourselves with the hero); and *bhayanaka* the possibility of two different emotions being occasioned by the same cause: Bhairava “terrifies” because his radical worship involves the “disgusting” transgression of taboos of purity (to extrapolate from Abhinava’s own extra-theatrical praxis). This overcoming of revulsion – otherwise so constitutive of the (emotional life of the) Brahmin – is not an invention of antinomian Tantra, but rather the generalisation of an already Vedic principle: Jagannatha characterises the (literary depiction of) disgust felt for the fat, flesh, or blood of the sacrificial animal to be a mere semblance (*bibhatsabhasa*).

the spice of humour (*hasya*), though especially enhancing the enjoyment of the erotic sentiment, can also be employed to depict and censure the improper pursuit of any of these legitimate life-goals. Since we are able to enjoy the *rasa* only by participating in the values projected by the (idealised) protagonists, the underlying moral injunctions are subliminally implanted and reinforced as through the tender ministrations of a loving wife. Classical Sanskrit theatre thus reflects a convergence of aesthetics and ethics: a traditional Indian exposed to such cultural pedagogy from all sides would often act appropriately because this was not just morally right but also a matter of good taste.⁴⁵ This attempt – problematic in any civilisation – to align artistic sensibility with socio-religious norms is perhaps best epitomised by the “semblance of *rasa*” (*rasabhāsa*) that results when the corresponding emotion is evoked through “improper” (*anuchita*)

stimuli. The stock example is the villain Ravana’s (“pathetically”) genuine but unreciprocated love for Sita (the chaste wife of Lord Rama) despite the social gulf that separates them in terms of age, status, and so on. Though the heroine’s innate attractiveness and the natural responses of the demon-king inevitably evoke the erotic sentiment, its consolidation is immediately⁴⁶ thwarted by our apprehension of these incompatibilities and her contempt for him. The question here is whether this “semblance of (the erotic) sentiment” amounts to little more than the intrusion of moral considerations into an aesthetic context where they are otherwise of no relevance, or is it an aesthetic category in its own right, like a regular *rasa* with its wake of *vyabhicharins*. The permanent tension and possible conflict between the socio-religious norms governing human behaviour and the imaginative exploitation of the latter for procuring public delight is explicitly discussed by

⁴⁵ This complex and elusive relationship has been explored with great sensitivity and clarity by my long-standing interlocutor and friend, Frank Burch Brown, in his *Good Taste, Bad Taste, Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000). Even while restricting and conditioning the universal range of artistic possibilities, a religious tradition at the same time becomes the inspiration and resource for the remaining privileged modes of expression that continue to expand and proliferate, ultimately though subtly effecting profound shifts even in the theological backbone of the tradition. This essay may be considered, among other things, a concerted attempt to likewise reconsider “Hinduism” in the light of a shared aesthetic sensibility.

⁴⁶ Pollock (see note 28) endorses Ingalls’s translation of the relevant passage from Abhinava to the effect that what we experience is actually *śringāra* and that it is only on looking back that we recognise it to be merely a laughable semblance. He then proceeds to reject this claim by pointing out that *rasabhāsa* had been accepted by the tradition itself as a distinct and valid aesthetic category. Abhinava is saying, on the contrary, that our appreciation of *śringārabhāsa* is a complex cognition that comprises within itself an incipient but defining element of love that is immediately sublated and transformed into humour (*hasya*) instead. This is what allows him to press ahead and affirm that the semblance of any emotion whatsoever results in *hasya*. My entire PhD was, in a sense, dedicated to demonstrating that this was not some idiosyncratic rationalisation on the part of an Indian didact to “laugh away” the “contradiction” between aesthetics and axiology, but a penetrating insight into the psychology of laughter.

subsequent rhetoricians and the verdict is almost invariably in favour of curtailing artistic liberties.⁴⁷ But is "propriety" (*auchitya*) a moral ("social") or an aesthetic category or, rather, symptomatic of the "confused" overlapping of the two domains?⁴⁸ Though morality and art constitute distinct domains – each with its own

practices, rules, and rationality – they are also intertwined through their very nature, particularly in the context of normative theatre.⁴⁹ Over and above the inevitable conflicts over where (external) boundaries are to be drawn, the poetics of suggestion often revolves around the (at least imaginative) transgression of social norms, the connoisseur's ability to

⁴⁷ After Pollock's lecture on aesthetics (second in a series of four on "Sanskrit Culture on the Eve of Colonialism") at the Collège de France on 22 March 2005, where he reduced *auchitya* to "social impropriety" and attributed this "confusion" to the entire tradition, I objected that for Abhinava (as for many other connoisseurs) the veritable pearls (*muktaka*) of the erotic sentiment were to be found in poets like Amaru, who celebrated the crookedness of the ways of love, including the adulterous woman (who is the stock example from the outset for Ananda's illustration of *dhvani*). We first ought to address, I insisted, this obvious "contradiction" before attempting to unearth more deeply embedded and hence "unconscious" cultural constraints. His response – that what may have been less true at Abhinava's time was very much the case later for Jagannatha – is well demonstrated in "The Social Aesthetic." Bhoja goes to the extent of proposing that poets should "rectify" even those moral misdemeanours enshrined in the epics. However, even Jagannatha argues that, despite its flaws, the "semblance of *rasa*" is not a (total) absence of *rasa* (as claimed by others), and cites the more liberal view of the "ancients" (*prachina*) on the validity of (our appreciation of) polyandrous *shringara* (as in Draupadi's simultaneous love for the five Pandava brothers) that he rejects altogether. This tightening of socio-aesthetic norms seems to reflect rather a growing and defensive conservatism within Hindu society (see note 110 below); there is evidence that Muslim poets in the Persian tradition found the Sanskrit treatment of certain (especially erotic) themes too direct.

⁴⁸ Bear in mind that in India, more than anywhere else, there was not only great regional and other diversity but also a socio-aesthetic hierarchy among the spectators that was reflected within the drama itself. The stage characters are thus classified as elevated (*uttama*), middling (*madhyama*), or inferior (*adhama*), each class being distinguished by their behaviour and responses. With regard to their sense of humour, for example, the lowly laugh loudly at the least provocation, whereas the nobler persons barely manage a smile in appreciation of subtle wit. This implies that Ravana's amorous antics might strike a ready chord in the less cultivated while provoking an element of distaste in those whose moral compass has become second nature. The deliberate use of humour to chastise the infringement of social norms – advocated also by Bergson later in the West – may be understood as mediating between these two perspectives: by laughing at the transgressor we are weaning ourselves away from the same propensity in us and becoming more like Rama. However, the underlying moral sensibility might remain worlds apart as seen in the even worse ridicule of the aristocratic villain in "The Little Clay Cart" for imposing himself on the virtuous courtesan Vasantasena, the "unprofessional" heroine of the play.

⁴⁹ Their divergence is perhaps best exemplified by the opposing stances taken by the two founding fathers of Sanskrit poetics with respect to the treatment of the anti-hero: whereas Dandin opines that highlighting his virtues would enhance our enjoyment of the hero's eventual triumph, Bhamaha holds it futile and counter-productive to praise a foregone loser. Bhoja adjudicates the dispute by proposing that the villain's flaws and violations of social norms should be depicted as bringing upon his eventual downfall, whereas his virtues should serve to magnify the hero's preeminence. This clinches Pollock's thesis that Sanskrit literary theory completely collapses the two domains into the social aesthetic, whereas the emergence of this discussion at the very beginning and its continuing till the end (Jagannatha) suggests to me rather that the poet-moralists were keenly aware of the (inclusive) disjunction.

appreciate their validity even while sympathetically entertaining the possibility (and even likelihood) of their circumvention (if not suspension). The uncertain and ambivalent status of *rasabhasa* with regard to "good" and "bad" taste is no doubt symptomatic of a larger cultural "project" where the (rigid external) observance of (binding socio-religious) norms is gradually subsumed within a generalised aesthetic sensibility that is keenly attuned to (the "irregularities" of) particular context and individual circumstance. Born of and appealing to a highly diverse society – where each (sub-) caste is (self-) regulated by its distinct and often conflicting norms – "Hindu" taste is the product of constant (re-) "negotiation."⁵⁰

Aesthetic Rapture Embodies a "Descending" Spiritual Realisation

Ever since the Buddha's "sceptical" interrogations into the nature of self and the categories we impose upon our world of suffering, Indian philosophy has always proceeded – especially given the diversity of its often mutually exclusive perspectives (*darshana*) – from a rigorous analysis of everyday experience that appeals to the logic of common sense, which is precisely what grounds the evolution of their polemics upon a shared bedrock of reason.⁵¹ The radical non-dualist schools of both Vedism (Advaita) and Buddhism (Madhyamika) that constitute, for many still, the highest reaches of Indian spirituality affirm the ultimate identity of worldly immanence (*samsara*) and transcendental reality (*nirvana*). But they do not

⁵⁰ This principle is best embodied by the *mahabrahmana*, who paradoxically combines the two extreme poles of the Hindu caste-society: pure brahmin and untouchable. Pushing his formula of the "semblance of any *rasa*" (*rasabhasa*) becoming humour to its extreme but logical conclusion, Abhinava affirms that the "semblance of humour (*hasyabhasa*) is itself productive of humour," and then proceeds to attribute *hasyabhasa* to this "great brahmin" clown! So do his (pseudo-?) "jokes" provoke our laughter in bad taste, amount to no humour at all, or provide a ready disguise for wit that is completely lost on (the vast majority of) the audience? Whatever the case, why does he stand beside the chief (moral) protagonist of the play as his equal (see note 117 below)?

⁵¹ Though all the *darshanas* draw their inspiration from the privileged insights of *yogins* (Buddhism and Jainism) or even from Revelation (brahmanical schools), they are intent on deriving general principles and conditions of validity that would apply universally to the specific phenomenon they are investigating. Thus, Nyaya-Vaisheshika realism accounts systematically for pragmatic activity and logical inference in the external world (despite its theism); Samkhya-Yoga for human psychology, uncovering and dissolving the "unconscious" (despite its finality in self-liberation); Advaita scrutinises the inherently dialectical nature of all cognitive categories (so as to transcend them); even the Purva Mimamsa (despite its avowed purpose of justifying and preserving the Vedic ritual) has contributed greatly to hermeneutics in general and has eventually helped clarify the specificity of poetic language (see note 22 above); though Sanskrit itself was "normalised" to contain and preserve the Vedic Revelation, it has served as the privileged medium for such "secular" intellectual pursuits (see note 75 below) and for the poetic expressions which are the object of classical aesthetic theory. Conversely, the Buddhist focus on emancipation nurtured the freedom of this critical impulse so crucial to Indian thought (instead of letting it become the slave of any overriding technological project or of market fundamentalism), even as Jaina "agnosticism" (*syad-vada*) helped preserve philosophical discourse from narrow theological dogmatism.

provide the conceptual framework or epistemic categories required to account for the (psychosomatic processes underlying this) transformation of everyday life into an expression of inner emancipation, for artistic creation as an autonomous domain, nor for the reflexive consciousness that distinguishes aesthetic sentiment.⁵² The enjoyment of *rasa* is not a "spiritual" experience in the regular sense, for some of its choice expressions are in love-poetry with absolutely no religious overtones, so much so that it's been possible to claim (with king Bhoja) that the erotic sentiment (*śhrīngara*) is indeed the *rasa* par excellence permeating all the other emotions. At the same time, the ability to discriminate the nuances merely suggested by the poem and to identify aesthetically with its emotional "texture" presupposes not just an inner detachment on the part of the

connoisseur (*sa-bhīdaya*) but also a certain "purity" of heart (*bhīdaya*), so much so that for Abhinava the fundamental *rasa* is that of tranquility (*śhanta*) which all the other *rasas* emerge from and disappear into, just as the phenomenal world itself may be understood as waves "ruffling" the calm mirror of the enlightened state. *Rasa* is thus characterised by a peculiar state of awareness that simultaneously "transcends" (*lokottara*) the "objective" configuration and the corresponding "subjective" emotion, but is nevertheless, unlike the introversion of a *yogin*, both receptive to and intent on enjoying the sensory impressions.⁵³ In this respect, it is both a fore-taste and after-taste of the sort of "mystical" experience privileged by Abhinavagupta that dissolves the distinction between the sacred and the profane.⁵⁴ When

⁵² These non-dualist philosophers were often (radical) Tantric practitioners, which accounts for their relative lack of enthusiasm for defending the conceptual scaffolding erected by "ascending" spiritual paths that advocated steadfast withdrawal from the senses and even extreme asceticism. Abhinava demolishes not just the Samkhya dualism of spirit and matter, but also the uniform need for the disciplines of classical yoga. The grammarian Bhartrihari had already introduced the principle of "reflexive awareness" (*pratyavamarsha*) as an attribute specific to language, without which (the "light" of Vedantic) consciousness (*prakasha*) would be unable to "illumine" its objects. The Pratyabhijñā reclaims this faculty as an inherent "power" (*śhakti*) of (self-) consciousness, the key insight animating Abhinava's (and the tradition's) insistence on the *sui generis* nature of *rasa*.

⁵³ Abhinava emphasises that the determinants (*vibhava*) and other elements of the aesthetic configuration are not external objects at all but only cognitive constructs (*vijñānārtha*), which is why they are referred to through such distinctive terminology: it is only by analogy that they are identified with the psychological stimuli recalled from real-life. Similarly, the *rasa* experience is not characterised by subjectivity because its internal cognitive structure inhibits the emergence of the (limited) subject (*pramātṛ*): a mode of "extroversion" that arrests and reflects (self-) awareness.

⁵⁴ Western Indologists, particularly those who fancy having wholly freed themselves from the Christian prejudices underlying European thought, persist in imposing their inherited dichotomy of the sacred and the profane on Indian culture. Thus Abhinava's focus on the "psychology of the reader response" is typically described as the "intrusion of religious preoccupations" into "secular literature" where they do not rightly belong (cf. note 46 above). The Harvard pioneer of research into *śhanta rasa*, Jeffrey M. Masson, has gone so far as to suggest that Abhinava's "rationalisations" are actually a sustained attempt to some-

Rasa is a cognitive construct (Bhartrihari)

Masson on 2010

rooted in and illuminated by spiritual insight (bolstered by intellectual discrimination), this "aesthetic stance" may be generalised to the world at large, such that the experience of *rasa* is no longer evoked and conditioned by a specifically "artistic" artifact but is revealed even in biological pleasures (such as eating, drinking, and sex)⁵⁵ or ritual activities (such as the religious devotion of an Utpaladeva) as an inherent and inalienable property of reflexivity (*vimarsha*) within consciousness.⁵⁶ Such "aesthetic rapture" (*chamatkara*), even independently of the play of emotions in the mirror of art, is after all the original referent of the term "*rasa*" in the *Upanishads* (*raso vai sah*).⁵⁷

Ambiguous Status of Art within the Spectrum of the Religious Life

Partaking in both the spiritual and the

sensuous dimensions of human experience, the enjoyment of art is something less than either pole though potentially capable of embracing and surpassing both. Not only may any transcendental underpinnings be denied by the modern artistic sensibility, the overflowing experience of *rasa* that sometimes spontaneously emerges in the course of the "ascending" modes of Indian spirituality, such as the wholly introspective yogic discipline, is canonically recognised as much, if not more, as an obstacle to full illumination than as a sure sign of progress. Both the Vedic brahmins intent on sacrifice and the early Buddhist monks intent on liberation (*arhat*) were averse to the temptations of the senses even, and perhaps especially, when they were disguised as art. On the other hand, the aesthetic experience may be said to be

how assuage his "guilt" for enjoying sensual literature (like our naughty Krishna caught red-handed with his finger in the "cookie-jar" full of ghee?)! Edwin Gerow has argued more cogently that it is rather the aesthetic experience that has provided the paradigm for Abhinava's religio-philosophical outlook. True to its name, Indian non-dualism seeks the transcendent by plunging into the heart of profane experience.

⁵⁵ Dusan Pajin ("Remembrance and Recognition: Plato, Abhinavagupta and Proust," in this volume) illustrates several of these techniques, from the *Vijnana-bhairava-tantra*, of "self-remembering" (*aham-bhava*) in the midst of sensuous experience with concrete examples from the fiction of the French writer, Marcel Proust.

⁵⁶ More than a mere "apologetics" for a resolutely theistic monism, the "doctrine of recognition" (*pratyabhijna*) could just as well be understood as a thorough-going attempt to defend the reality and validity of our (day-to-day transactions in the external) world. Indeed, Abhinava keeps whispering into the ear of the Hindu logician (*naiyayika*) having a really hard time in the face of the "deconstructive" onslaughts of his Buddhist counterpart (whom he eggs on) his offer to save (the reality of) his common-sense world if only he would accept its internality to Consciousness.

⁵⁷ The sweeping movement of "return" within the Indian sensibility back to this world-affirming and joyous dimension of Vedic spirituality had already thoroughly interiorised the Buddhist (and Jaina) conviction of human life as suffering (*sarvam dukkham*), a cultural verdict that is embodied in Abhinava's (ambivalent) elevation of *shanta* (peace) to the status of the supreme *rasa* with the Buddha himself as its patron deity. The Enlightened One sought to dissolve the blinding emotional turbulence that keeps the wheel of existence spinning by interrogating the ignorance at its core; Abhinava seeks to "pacify" them through discriminating enjoyment.

derivative in the sense that this imaginative "re-creation" presupposes and depends on (our prior experience of) the real world of practical pursuits. Whereas the modern artist may trespass on and even violate the territory of the philosopher, mystic, politician, linguist, advertiser, etc., in seeking to create his/her own values and reshape the medium, the traditional *kavi* (poet) simply endorsed, illustrated, propagated, and humanised the existing order of things and inherited value system that had required a long period of apprenticeship to assimilate and master. Aesthetics comes into its own particularly in those domains of endeavour where the spirit casts its shadow upon the world of the senses that, in turn, reach out towards their own hidden unifying principle. Here's where cultural "choices" have been made: where ethical imperatives have been articulated around the life of the emotions, where the details of human *scientia* are transmitted in context, where an experiential feel of proportion and balance is shared with a younger generation that's been exposed only to the theory, where creative energies are awakened, challenged, and offered models worthy of emulation. The aesthetics of *rasa* has flowered in the thought of Abhinavagupta, precisely because his philosophical endeavour has been to conceptualise a (for him) supreme mode of "mystical" experience that dissolves the opposition between transcendence and immanence, sacred and profane, the spiritual and the sensuous. Though derivative of and

subordinate to both religious and worldly pursuits, this cumulative "sensitivity" has been constitutive of "Hindu" culture in the most inclusive sense of the term.

dissolution of
opposition in Hindu
culture

Quiescence as the Soul of *Rasa*: Liberation through Emotion

It is evident that the passages on the *rasa* of "tranquility" (*shanta*) in the *Natyashastra* had been interpolated into some manuscripts as a response to its effective use by the Buddhists to promote the ideal of renunciation through poetry and theatre. Orthodox Hindu dramaturges refused to accept *shanta* because the traditional eight emotions were sufficient to account for meaningful activity (*pravritti*) in this world in pursuit of *purushartha*.

Abhinava stretches the transcendental possibilities of the aesthetic experience in two ways. Firstly, *shanta* is given the supreme place as corresponding to the pursuit of the highest human goal of spiritual emancipation and presided over as such by the Buddha. His defense of *shanta* consists largely of demonstrating the possibility of its practical implementation on the stage in terms of motivation, plot, recognition, identification, etc. Why would a liberated soul pursue a consistent course of action? By what external consequences would we recognise his inner peace? How could worldly spectators empathise with his (lack of) behaviour? Secondly, *shanta* is shown to underlie the other eight "orthodox" *rasas* as their common denominator constituting as it were the indispensable "*rasa*-ness" of what would

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otherwise be merely mundane emotions. So much so that he is now obliged to turn around and clarify that the canonical distinction between the basic emotion (*sthayin*) and its corresponding *rasa* still holds good even for the "cessation" (*shama*)/"tranquility" (*shanta*) pair. Whereas Asvaghosha began, not without misgivings, by composing his epic poetry and plays primarily with the didactic intent of extolling the Buddha's (life and) attainment of *nirvana*, by now the varied sentiments evoked have themselves become kaleidoscopic reflections of that ineffable state of appeasement, and integrated as such into the Hindu scheme of values.⁵⁸ Yet, Abhinava's own privileged (Tantric) mode of spiritual experience was one where the barrier between the transcendent and the immanent was completely dissolved such that the world of the senses was not just reflected within but a mere phenomenal projection (*abhāsa*) of the supreme

Consciousness. He also affirms that any of the emotions, not just *shanta*, could serve as the springboard for emancipation: for example, a consistent attitude of laughing at the whole world as "incongruous" (*vikṛita*)! Such dispassionate and ubiquitous laughter, in imitation of his terrible deity Rudra-Shiva, did characterise the comic Pashupata ascetic.⁵⁹ Emotion binds only because it is directed at particular objects as opposed to others; when universalised, love, for example, liberates rather than enslaves us to the object of attachment. This latter possibility was developed in subsequent centuries, particularly in Bengal, into a full-fledged aesthetics of "devotion" (*bhakti*) to a supreme personal God who transcends the objects of the senses that are nevertheless offered up in worship as manifestations and indices of his/her glory. *Bhakti* too serves as an emotional bridge between the world and its transcendence, and as such it is possible

⁵⁸ The only sustained example of the viability of *shanta* that Abhinava, in his ambivalent defense, is able to provide, is the play *Nagananda* on the Bodhisattva Jimutavahana, which was written by the "Hindu" king Harsha, who however longed to end his life in the robes of a Buddhist mendicant. Does this signal the triumph of the Buddhist renunciation ideal within the heart of Hindu sensibilities? Not quite! For Abhinava integrates *shanta* in such a way as to leave the existing scheme of *rasas* intact and even concedes that it is impossible to represent "tranquility" in its pure form on the stage, and that it needs to be supplemented by extraordinary modes of the other *rasas*. Abhinava refers approvingly to Buddhist theories of *rāsa* as a "stream of consciousness" and, by then, even monks like Dharmakīrti had begun to write very sensuous poetry in Sanskrit. The endorsement of the Buddhist *shanta* has resulted not in the rejection of the world-drama but in its appreciation in an aesthetic mode

⁵⁹ Unlike his French successor, Bergson (see notes 48 above and 119 below), Abhinava cannot be confined within a "sociological" perspective, which hardly does justice to Hindu culture that accords a privileged place to sacred laughter – the terrifying *attahāsa* of Lord Shiva imitated by his "crazy" Pashupata devotees – as signifying transgression. Even the Kapalika "ascetics" who are ridiculed for their debauchery in the "farces" (*prahasana*) are valorised from an esoteric perspective. Bharata's association of *hasya* specifically with *eros* has (Shaiva) ritual roots in the "lechery" (*śringarāna*) feigned by the (brahmin) Pashupata ascetic as an integral part of his spiritual discipline, an association that is maintained within the drama in the "lewd chastity" of the (hero's) "counsellor in the arts of love" (*vidushaka*).

to rework (and rewrite) the entire sensuous framework of *rasa*-aesthetics around the attitude of personal devotion. Infused with such aesthetic sensibility, the nectar of *bhakti-rasa* overflows the confines of both (secular) art and (religious) ritual to outpour already into the hymns of Utpaladeva, who promulgated the new non-dualist doctrine of the "Recognition of the Lord" (*ishvara-pratyabhijna*): "become" God to worship God (or, if you prefer, realise your own Godhood by worshipping God).⁶⁰

Rasa in the Service of Devotion or the Aestheticisation of *Bhakti*?

Worshipping (the image of) the deity in a temple is neither a mode of (Orientalist) art appreciation (as in a museum), nor a worldly relation with another (royal) person (however powerful and benign). Aesthetically reinforced by the variegated props of ritual activity

and often engaged in as a mode of supplication, the conduct of such *bhakti* nevertheless draws upon and revolves around the life of the emotions that are (at least temporarily) withdrawn from their routine objects and focussed instead on a transcendental Person. Precisely because God not only appears in human form but takes on all possible relations to the devotee, Hindu polytheism can appropriate any (conceivable nuance of any) "worldly" emotion for religious purposes.⁶¹ *Bhakti* is therefore not simply one *rasa* among an array of sentiments, but an all-consuming passion (*prema*) that tends to fuse the aesthetic and the personal into a wholly novel configuration around a privileged object of worship. The entire *rasa*-canon becomes a resource for the religious imagination to transform the world into a stage where the soul is no longer a mere spectator but the principal actor performing for the gratification and beseeching the intervention of a

⁶⁰ Unlike the reigning pan-Indian *gnosis* of Shankara's Advaita Vedanta or the dualist schools of Shaiva Siddhanta ritualism then prevalent in Kashmir (before finding their home in the Tamil country down South), the Pratyabhijna doctrine was expounded in order to found and justify (the sensuous practices of) *bhakti* on a firm non-dualist basis. The "personal" God being worshipped externally is a deliberate projection of, as real as, and non-different from the Self (*ātmānam eva jñeyī-kuryāt, pṛthak sthiti jñeyam ... na*). Whether the focus is on the (emotional relationship to this) "objectified" Deity or the (thereby mediated gnostic) realisation of the non-dual Consciousness, or fluctuating between the two poles, depends largely on temperament.

⁶¹ Devotional music suitable to Christian taste would seem limited by the range of acceptable attitudes to Christ: for example, suffering on the Cross, forgiving his persecutors, our joy at his resurrection, ascending to or looking down from Heaven, communion with fellow men in partaking of the Eucharist, etc. Music in the Islamic context is either prohibited for its frivolous audacity in seeking to mediate the transcendental reality of Allah, or embraced by the mystic in promoting a trance-like union (as in dervish dances or *qawwali* singing), or, curiously enough, by masquerading as "secular" poetry and song by resorting to allegory. By contrast, there is no limit to the devotional range of "Hindu" emotions, and even the opposition between the sacred and the secular becomes blurred, especially in the worship of the mischievous, fickle, adulterous Cupid-Krishna, who has been "humanised" more than many real-life human dignitaries. Oothukadu Venkata Kavi's all-consuming *bhakti* for the child Krishna did not prevent him from taunting, scolding, and even ridiculing (*hasya*) the God for his errant ways (see notes 86 and 87 below).

divine Witness. Like aesthetics, *bhakti* may be approached in two ways: as hovering between the transcendental and the immanent, as seems to be the stance of the (qualified) dualism of some, especially Vaishnava, philosophical schools; or fully embracing the opposing poles, as with the Trika, which claims to be an inclusive supreme non-dualism (*paradvaita*) that integrates the dualist perspective. Though a valid and desirable emotion, Abhinava himself rejects *bhakti* as a separate *rasa* for the same reason that he refuses other propositions such as "affection for a child" (*vatsalya*), etc., that they would result in an uncontrollable multiplication of entities whereas Bharata offered a still workable scheme of eight (or nine, with *shanta*) *rasas*. Instead, he treats *bhakti* (and the like) as a particular mode of "love" (*rati*) that is best known and universally enjoyed in its expression as the erotic sentiment (*shringara*). His secret tantric writings, as opposed to his better known and authoritative treatises on aesthetics proper, would rather suggest that *shringara* might be the ultimate *rasa*.⁶² The spiritualisation of the "libido" (*kama*) in the (often transgressive) context of sexual enjoyment is indeed the occasion for the most exuberant and even "somatic" descriptions of the

effervescence of *rasa*, for example, as an "interiorised emission" (*virya-vikshobha*) that powerfully vitalises the "heart" overflowing with indescribable emotions. Through the "primordial sacrifice" (*kula-yaga*), "physiological" pleasure and even objects of disgust become transmuted into an "aesthetic" experience that reveals the ultimate (*anuttara*) nature of Reality. The independence of the aesthetic domain, vis-à-vis the moral, the religious, the profane, is brought into relief when these "underground" writings are juxtaposed to his public commentaries on formal art. After all, Amaru's love-poems celebrate the erotic as such without moral edification or religious intent. Some of the persistent motifs of Indian poetry, such as the celebration of the adulterous woman (*abbisarika*), would be even construed as "immoral" were they to spill over into real life as worthy of enactment, as they do in certain "tantricised" modes of (even Vaishnava) devotion (such as the Sahajiya). While exploring "devotion" in all its human possibilities (between friends, towards child, husband, parents, king, suicide, etc.), *bhakti* too has not just countenanced such transgressive attitudes but even encouraged them as the supreme manifestation of surrender. Despite their inherent tension, the

⁶² Abhinava's esoteric treatment of *eros* (*kama*) might best explain king Bhoja's – he was himself a contemporary Tantrika – public elevation of *shringara* to the supreme *rasa* from which not only all the others but even the worldly passions emerge, and around which are centered all ego-centric human pursuits (of the life-goals). What Bhoja's great literary synthesis, the *Shringara-Prakasha* attempts might be understood as a sort of Hindu "psychoanalysis" – but from the perspective of a thoroughly "aestheticised" sexuality – that not only embraces morality and love (*prema*) but equates *eros* with the (self-aware and synthesising) "ego-function" (*aham-kara*), whereas Freud's materialism posits a polar opposition between libidinous instinct (id) and individual adaptation.

waves of "worldly" *shringara* and "religious" *bhakti* could swirl together – when aroused by the irresistible (flute of) Krishna, the supreme Lover, dancing amidst the enraptured souls – losing themselves in the embrace of an indescribable "play of sentiments" (*rasa-lila*). This is the supreme achievement of the melodious Sanskrit of Jayadeva's "Song of God" (*Gita-govinda*), where the climax of sexual union is surrender to the call of the Divine.⁶³

Religious Art as Propaganda: Trans-sectarian Aesthetics of *Rasa*

The evolution of Indian aesthetics – like that of philosophy and spiritual techniques – was conditioned,

facilitated, and even necessitated by the needs of sectarian propaganda and (to counter) conversion within a larger process of religious acculturation across the whole subcontinent. Archaic Vedic religion had elements of poetry, music, dance, mime, dialogue, and even theatrical episodes that were typically marked by (sometimes overt) confrontation, sexuality, and violence.⁶⁴ Though such performances often seem to be the intrusion of the surrounding popular culture that must have continued to conserve and develop them,⁶⁵ the classical sacrifice was thoroughly reformed before 600 BC to all but eliminate this crucial agonistic dimension such that whatever remained of artistic sensibility was made entirely

⁶³ There is a tantricised ritual context to such *bhakti* that should not be overlooked. Jayadeva is said to have married Padmavati, the dancer (*deva-dasi*) at the Puri Jagannath temple, and settled there to serve the "Lord of the World" and his wife simultaneously. The tradition of *devadasi* dance continues at the temple to this day. In his introductory verse, he affirms that those given to "remembering" the Lord (Vishnu) and who find pleasure in love sports would appreciate his ode. The story goes that his courtesan-wife was trying in vain to distract him with her charms while he was intent on completing a verse, and eventually insisted that they have lunch together. Leaving the verse half-finished, he goes out to take his bath first. Suddenly, she sees him rush back to finish the couplet while insisting that she massage him at the same time. When the real Jayadeva comes from his bath to enjoy the meal together, they realise that it was the Lord of the World who had come in person to bless them both with his divine inspiration. So did our inscrutable Krishna stoop to seduce his own devotee's wife, or is the supreme Lover ultimately the projection of Jayadeva's own Self, or is it just that "feeding" the senses with the pleasures of tantric sex (see note 85 below) reveals the playful Krishna residing in the heart of the *bhakta*? See Kapila Vatsyayan's online multimedia project at the Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts: <http://ignca.nic.in/gita.htm>.

⁶⁴ Attempts have thus been made from the beginning to trace the hieratic "origin" of the classical theatre to the *Rg-vedic* dialogue hymns (Yama and Yami; Pururavas and Urvashi; Indra and Indrani, etc.) episodes in the Mahavrata ritual (copulation between *brahmacharin* and hetaera after an abusive altercation; exchange between a brahmin praising and *shudra* reviling the sacrificial performance; etc.). My own work on the mythico-ritual underpinnings of the *vidushaka* suggests rather that the theatre as a whole is a transposition and reworking of the underlying Vedic sacrificial ideology onto an all-embracing profane medium, which would justify Bharata's characterisation of stagecraft as the *Natya-Veda*.

⁶⁵ There have hence been opposing attempts to derive classical theatre from popular mime, puppet-theatre, "subaltern" and subsequently Buddhist-inspired ridicule of Brahmanism. This dichotomy reflects rather the distorting Western projection of a (bourgeois) elite/popular (working-class) opposition onto Indian culture, where the two poles of this continuum have constantly shaped each other down the millennia even while remaining in tension.

subservient to the claims of a purified ritual universe.⁶⁶ This "axial" transformation was not specific to the Vedic "orthodoxy" but the reflection of a wider spiritual movement that questioned and rejected the violent, sexual, inebriating, and other excesses of the "pre-classical" religious culture.⁶⁷ Both the orthodox Brahmin steeped in a ritualistic world-view and the early Buddhist (later Theravada) renouncer were wary of – if not overtly hostile towards – gratifying the senses through the refined, and hence all the more dangerous, enchantment of profane art.⁶⁸ In their growing rivalry, however, both Brahmanism and Buddhism were

obliged to adopt the theatre, the arts, and sensuous expression in general, as a privileged medium for inculcating their respective world-views and value-systems, and as a means for gaining or retaining adherents among the lay public and various ethnic communities on the fringes of the "Aryan" society.⁶⁹ The earlier forms of brahmanical theatre may only be guessed at from Bharata's definitions of various long extinct genres with cosmogonic, agonistic, even violent themes, of which we have no surviving specimens, but which must have been closely modelled on the Vedic sacrifice and its mythico-ritual universe.⁷⁰ The Mahayana's eventual appropriation of epic poetry and stagecraft to propagate

⁶⁶ The triumph of classical Brahmanism is epitomised by the contest between Prajapati and Death, where the latter performs the (Vratya-) sacrifice through songs accompanied by the harp, dance, and sexual intercourse. Finally, Prajapati, who represents the sacrificer, overcomes his opponent by neutralising, appropriating, and sublimating these into the *Rg-vedic* praise hymns, *Sama-Vedic* songs, and the dramatised ritual of the *Yajurveda*. The "shamanising" potential of such artistic expression would have however been conserved, elaborated, and systematised by subsequent Shaiva religious currents such as the Pashupatas.

⁶⁷ This schema attempts to simplify, for the sake of intelligibility, a civilisational process that is more complicated. The Indus-Sarasvati civilisation – an exceptionally pacific culture that nevertheless seems to have sanctioned (animal and) human sacrifices – collapsed by around 1700 BC to be replaced by perpetually warring tribes and a generalisation of sacrificial frenzy. What Jainism, classical Brahmanism, and early Buddhism share is the common ethos of self-restraint and "non-violence" (*ahimsa*) that came to permeate the whole of Indian civilisation. This is the cultural rationale for the absence of tragedy in the classical theatre.

⁶⁸ In his "Not-Self Consciousness and the Aniconic in Early Buddhism" (in J. Scott Jordan, ed., *Modeling Consciousness Across the Disciplines Symposium* [Lanham, Maryland: UP of America, 1999] 269-80), Michael Rabe interprets the nymphs (*apsaras*) depicted on the Bharhut Vedita (*stupa* railing): as "reenacting the futile wiles of Mara's daughters [...] the earliest surviving depictions of the threesome that came to be known in later Buddhist texts as Tanha, ("Thirst"), Arati ("Dissatisfaction"), and Raga ("Passion"), [...] celebrating the Buddha's triumph by reenacting the frustrated dances of Death's daughters, to the accompaniment of harps, drums, and a flute! An early Buddhist passion play, indeed." It is as if the Buddha would have reenacted Prajapati's triumph over (the artful wiles of) Mrtyu.

⁶⁹ It is crucial to bear in mind that from the perspective of acculturation, Brahmanism and Buddhism – who despite their intense religious competition were often patronised by the same kings – found themselves on the same side of the cultural divide that distinguished those who subscribed to "Aryan" norms of behaviour. Equally important is that these norms themselves gradually evolved as other local (artistic) traditions were assimilated and "ethnically" redefined.

⁷⁰ The best evidence for this brahmanical inheritance is to be found in the "Preliminaries" (*purva-ranga*) retained in Bharata's compendium. F. B. J. Kuiper has adduced the festival of Indra's banner – the occasion

the Buddhist *dharma* – articulated around the supreme pursuit of *nirvana* that had as its aesthetic correlate the enjoyment of quietude (*shanta rasa*) – had for its familiar backdrop and counterpoint the profane pursuits of an urban milieu inhabited by not only monks but also merchants, artisans, courtesans, rogues, and kings.⁷¹ This process of “secularisation” is reflected, for example, in the “worldly” genre of the *prakarana* that the *Natyashastra* pairs with the supreme form called *nataka* that, though based on traditional legendary themes, is imbued with the same aesthetic sensibility. An earlier commentator had surmised that (a disciple of) Bharata had more or less synthesised two pre-existing schools of drama, namely the Brahmanical and the Shaiva, a thesis that Abhinava refutes not so much on historical grounds but because such composite origins would undermine the authority of the *Natyashastra*. It seems wholly plausible that the brahmanical stream would have been highly ritualistic and explicitly modelled on the Vedic sacrifice, whereas the Shaiva current would have remained

closely linked to the “shamanistic” possibilities of dance, music, and the tantric transmutation of the emotions. The transgressive Pashupata ascetics not only worshipped Shiva-Rudra as the Lord of Dance but were also expected to be familiar with the theatrical art. Bharata's school would have recast the interiority of *rasa* within the authoritative Vedic framework but with the focus now on entertaining a much wider lay public through epic, legendary, and profane themes.⁷² Restoring the authority of tradition for the contemporary mind would consist rather in demonstrating the coherence of the synthesis around a unified vision that in the past was affirmed through (the fiction of) single (often “eponymous”) authorship (whether to Bharata, Vyasa, or another “compiler”). Though the “Buddhist” *shanta* was missing in the prevailing manuscripts and its status as a traditional *rasa* hotly contested by Hindu orthodoxy, Abhinava himself was not above illustrating this (ongoing) project of acculturation by championing its (interpolated) cause in his (Kashmiri

of Brahma's stage-production of the first drama – and the ensuing conflict between gods and demons, the verbal contest between the hero and the *vidushaka*, and so on, as evidence of the origin of the theatre in Vedic cosmogony.

⁷¹ This transformation of aesthetic sensibility was so profound that the earliest specimens of Indian literature to have survived are of Buddhist provenance (c. second century): Asvaghosha's epic poems on the “Life of the Buddha” (*Buddha-charita*) and the conversion of his handsome and reluctant half-brother (*Saundarananda*), and fragments of drama (*Sariputra-prakarana*).

⁷² The “non-Vedic” (*avaidika*) *vidushaka*, who bears so many resemblances to the “initiated” (*dikshita*) Pashupata, thus emerges at the intersection of the socio-cosmic model of the brahmanical sacrifice and the “individualised” esotericism of the Tantras, to become the indispensable *alter ego* of the hero in dramatic narratives often inspired by the epics. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that in (the surviving fragment from) Asvaghosha's *Sariputraprakarana*, the first “Sanskrit” play, the brahmin clown already converses in Prakrit and seems to be the (otherwise most improbable) companion of the hero bent on renouncing the world.

recensions of the) *Natyashastra*, elevating the sentiment of “cessation” to the quintessence of the aesthetic experience, and crowning the Buddha as its patron deity.⁷³

Sanskritise, Popularise, and Acculturate: the Vernacular Triumph

Rigorously hemmed in from outside influences and preserved by brahmin lineages intent on maintaining its (and their) purity, the “obsolete” Veda remained the source and inspiration for a symbolic universe and sacrificial

ideology that had nevertheless continued to penetrate, adapt itself to, mould, and provide a shared framework for representations and practices at the popular and illiterate level.⁷⁴ Unlike other languages that derive their very names from a particular ethnicity, “Sanskrit” – which enabled the intelligentsia with otherwise mutually unintelligible mother-tongues to converse, debate, and learn from each other – simply means “polished” or “refined” as opposed to the “fallen” (from the norm) vernaculars (*apabhramsha*).⁷⁵ The manner in which this “language of

⁷³ Brahmanical thought as expressed in normative Sanskrit almost completely ignored the challenge of the radically different (religious, intellectual and) aesthetic traditions brought by Islamic invaders and immigrants from the twelfth century onwards, and became increasingly preoccupied with preserving and mimicking (the shadow of) past achievements. Having spearheaded a collaborative interdisciplinary effort to document, analyse, and account for this “Death of Sanskrit” in such diverse domains as the sciences, hermeneutics, law, and aesthetics, Sheldon Pollock has also drawn our attention to the dispersed and sporadic attempts by “new” (*navya*) intellectuals to reformulate inherited wisdom, sometimes quite radically. He ventured towards the end of his third “Mimamsa and the Fate of Moral Philosophy” (29 March 2005) of his recent series of four lectures at the Collège de France that the now over-wieldy tradition had suffocated under its own accumulated weight. This would be – I pointed out – because the forgotten constraints, hidden nature, and presiding logic of this cross-disciplinary systemicity would have been determined by the (by now thoroughly interiorised) Buddhist challenge, whereas the surviving Sanskrit tradition had inherited only half a conversation: the reason these “new” intellectuals were rejected – sometimes vehemently, and with all due respect, even by other members of their own family – was because their “innovations” could only be piecemeal. Rejuvenating Sanskrit knowledge systems for a global future requires that we reconstruct these millennial dialogues and reinstate such crossroad figures such as Bhartṛhari and Abhinavagupta.

⁷⁴ For a systematic account of the “Hindu” acculturation of Buddhist and tribal elements among the Tibeto-Burman Newars in the context of “Abhinavagupta and the Synthesis of Indian Culture,” see Sunthar Visuvalingam and Elizabeth Chaliar-Visuvalingam, “A Paradigm of Hindu-Buddhist Relations: Pachali Bhairab of Kathmandu” (*Evam* 3 (2004): 106–76). The most comprehensive case for the centrality of the brahmanical frame of reference even after the triumph of *bhakti* is Madeleine Biardeau, *Hinduism: Anthropology of a Civilisation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994).

⁷⁵ The attention and energy consecrated to Sanskrit was originally motivated by the imperative of preserving intact the Vedic corpus, frozen in a now archaic language (*chandās*) that was both distinct from and related to the forms of current usage (*bhasha*). Systematised and codified by Panini, kept alive and contemporary by Patanjali, Sanskrit (and the knowledge systems of which it was the privileged vehicle) was rendered even more universal and “secular” by generations of Buddhist grammarians. Not until the last century has any civilisation so self-consciously attempted to understand the phenomenon of speech in itself, transforming its unfathomable powers into a goddess of inspiration: Sarasvatī. The uniqueness of this achievement is measured by Panini’s unforeseen relevance for the abstract modelling of computer

the gods" facilitated the articulation of socio-cultural differences in the very process of reshaping and integrating this rich diversity within a hierarchised system of representations is perhaps best exemplified by the uniquely polyglot nature of the classical Indian theatre: whereas the brahmins, aristocracy, and the most elevated male roles spoke in Sanskrit, the women and plebian characters spoke in vernaculars that reflected their ethnic origins, region, caste, or station in life.⁷⁶ While the plot of the *nataka* (the most complete and exemplary dramatic form) derives from the epic traditions and pan-Indian legends and, no doubt, served as the model to be imitated by popular performances in the vernaculars, other

genres would have conversely drawn some if not all of their subject matter and inspiration from local narratives and styles, and from the vagaries of the profane world.⁷⁷ We have in this way inherited several major and readily distinguishable forms of dance-drama, each employing its own (set of) regional language(s) and all of which, despite taking great liberties, look back to the *Natyashastra* as the legitimising authority and frame of reference.⁷⁸ Conversely, some of the most widely appreciated modes (*raga*) of classical music bear names and reveal traits that suggest their popular origin in a specific region or caste, with the process of cross-fertilisation continuing till this day.⁷⁹ Such a hierarchised approach already

programming syntax, and his endorsement by otherwise mutually opposed schools of modern linguistic theory.

⁷⁶ Bharat Gupt, for example, has repeatedly called for the adaptation of the classical "Sanskrit" plays for performance in the contemporary Indian vernaculars. See our digest of the online exchanges around "Is Sanskrit Dead" which attempts to provide a preliminary overview of the complexity of the practical, political, cultural, and intellectual challenges to reviving Sanskrit.

<http://www.svabhinava.org/HinduCivilisation/Dialogues/SanskritDead-frame.htm>.

⁷⁷ Rajiv Malhotra recapitulates this acculturation process within its pan-Asian context in his (fiercely debated) Sulekha column, "Geopolitics and Sanskrit Phobia" (July 5, 2005; based on his plenary talk delivered in June 2005 at the Sanskrit Conference in Thailand).

<http://www.sulekha.com/expressions/column.asp?cid=306016>.

⁷⁸ The "northern" Sanskrit tradition has been best conserved in the "southern" Bharatanatyam, snapshots of whose intricate dance-movements have been immortalised in stone along the temple-walls of Tamil Nadu. See Padma Subrahmanyam's article on "Karanas and Angaharas: Some Pearls from the Fourth Chapter of the *Abhinavabharati*" (in this volume). In Kerala, the elaborately masked Kathakali has developed in a highly original manner that probably reflects the transplantation of Vedic Nambudiri traditions within a largely tribal milieu (see note 82 below). The cycle of thirteen plays attributed to Bhasa, which continued to be performed within the active repertoire of the Malayalam actors, thus violates several of Bharata's canons such as those forbidding the depiction of death or tragic endings. Secularised under Muslim influence, Kathak has continued to depict the variegated emotional flavours of Krishna's amorous pranks. Odissi, with its distinctively rounded postures (as opposed to the angular ones of Bharatanatyam) has also blended southern dance-styles with Hindustani *ragas* and instruments.

⁷⁹ For instance, Sindhu Bhairavi, Surati (Gujarat), Ahir ("milkman") Bhairav, Ananda Bhairavi (gypsies), Multani, Gujar Todi. The same melodic mode (*raga*) or rhythmic cycle (*tala*) might end up with contrasted high (*marga*) and (even several) popular (*deshiya*) styles of rendering, leaving it open to doubt whether a

finds sanction, within the classical tradition itself, in Bharata's distinction between the hieratic *gandharva* and the worldly *gana* (*desi*) *ragas* that Abhinava elaborates in terms of contrasted formal structure, purpose, usage, and function.⁸⁰ Sanskrit literary theory and practice drew much of its inspiration and illustration from the vernacular: Anandavardhana, in his foundational *Light of Suggestion* (*Dhvanyaloka*), proclaims the most delectable of sentiments, the erotic, to be most at home in Prakrit (which is, after all, the

language of the "opposite" sex). While commenting on the "elements of the gentle dance" (*lasyanga*), originally performed by the Shaiva Goddess, Abhinava dwells upon the particularities and judicious usage of the various regional vernaculars.⁸¹ The cultural vitality of the "worldly" language (*bhasha*) depended on such creative interaction with the everyday life of the people, a long symbiosis that has resulted in the Sanskritisation of most of the Indian vernaculars, including the otherwise recalcitrant Tamil.⁸² More

particular instance reflects the standardisation of a popular musical mode, the regional variation of a (lost) classical model, or an even more complex state of affairs. Some distinguished *ragas* (Kapi, Desh, etc.) of modern Carnatic music seem to have found their way south from other regions during Maratha rule, and are hence referred to as *deshiya*. *Ragas* shared in common that grew apart with the separate development of Carnatic and Hindustani music, to undergo yet further internal differentiation and admixture, have more recently been tending to influence each other even from a distance. Thus, the majestic Darbari Kanada – associated with Tansen in Akbar's court – has affected the southern rendering of (the *dhaivata* note in) the passionately moving Kanada. Carnatic composers and (often Muslim) Hindustani musicians popularised once exclusive *ragas* across the north-south divide, a homogenising process that has received a huge boost from (figures like A. R. Rehman in Madras) Bollywood.

⁸⁰ See the relevant section of Thakur Jaidev Singh, "Abhinavagupta's contribution to the solution of some problems in musicology" (in this volume). *Gandharva* music – employed only in the ritual preliminaries (*purvaranga*) to please the gods – was rigidly conservative in the rules governing the use of notes and microtones (*shruti*), rhythmic cycles (*taala*) were fixed and subordinated to the melody, and the words (*pada*) served essentially to express the melody and rhythm; like the Vedic sacrifice – and unlike the primarily aesthetic intention of *gana* that was used only in the actual play – *gandharva* produces unseen (*adrishta*) beneficial effects. Many "classical" (*grama*) *ragas* were somewhere in-between, based on *gandharva* and yet influenced by folk music.

⁸¹ See G. H. Tarlekar, "Abhinava's Treatment of the *Lasyangas*" (www.svabhinava.org). Abhinava notes that Saindhava (from Sindhu) – in which regional folk-plays like Dombika, Bijaka, etc., should be performed – consists of harsh and coarse language, and that Bhejjala's play (*rasaka*) called "The lovelorn condition of Radha" (*radha-vipralambha*) uses this vernacular. Bharata observes that Dhruva songs are typically in Sauraseni (while the Narkuta is in Magadhi) dialect: celestials should sing them in Sanskrit whereas men should resort to "semi-Sanskrit" (*ardha-samskritam*). Abhinava mentions the prevalence, in his own times, of such admixture of Sanskrit with regional languages in Kashmir (*shatakula*) and in the "southern" lands (*manipravalam*). These theatrical discussions on the (Sanskritisation of the) vernaculars reveal a wholly self-conscious "politics of acculturation" that extends to the whole of Indian "culture" (*samskriti*).

⁸² Malayalam, the regional language of Kerala, evolved relatively recently through the Sanskritisation of Tamil. The acculturating role is perhaps best exemplified by the *vidushaka* in the Kutiyattam (theatre), where he translates the Sanskrit speeches into a hybrid tongue (*mani-pravalam*) for a much wider vernacular audience. Unlike the *smarta*-brahmins of the Tamil country, who remained aloof from the surrounding

significant, in civilisational terms, was the continuing availability of the time-tested practices, intellectual achievements, artistic imagination, and cosmopolitan world-view recorded, systematised, and rationalised within this classical tradition as a perennial resource to draw upon for responding to contemporary challenges and exploring new modes of creativity in the vernaculars. Once the rustic speech that celebrated the playful amours of the mischievous Krishna amidst the wives of the cowherds at Mathura, *Braj-bhasha* was thus able to translate, appropriate, and adapt the science and art of *alamkara*, achieve literary distinction in its own right, vie with Sanskrit to attain a trans-regional status, and eventually become, as Hindi, the official language

of the Indian nation.⁸³ Hailing from families steeped in Sanskrit learning, poets like the pioneer Kesavdas drank deep from this pan-Indian inheritance to sustain their creative experiments within a vernacular milieu more attuned to their historical situation and immediate surroundings.⁸⁴ This "classical period" (*riti-kaal*) of Hindi literature ushered in a new and more generalised aesthetic sensibility: Braj poetry provided a mystical focus to the hitherto profane treatment of sexuality in Sanskrit tradition even while further humanising the sweet character of Krishna by making his amorous dalliances with Radha the primary focus of its treatment of *shringara*.⁸⁵ The esoteric lore underlying this bodily ecstasy has found

populations, the sexual politics (hypergamy) of the Nambudiris in establishing multiple and much-sought-after "relations" (*sambandha*) with women of (former) low-caste (Nair) matriarchal families, even while maintaining Vedic traditions, has contributed to Sanskrit's prestige in Kerala. It is probably no accident of history that the extant manuscripts of the *Abhinavabharati*, like Bhasa's plays, were discovered here.

⁸³ The following discussion is based on Allison Busch's article, "The Anxiety of Literary Innovation: The Practice of Literary Science in Hindi/Riti Tradition," *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern South Asia, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (24.2 [2004]), and our dialogue, available at <http://www.cssaame.ilstu.edu/issues/24-2/busch.pdf>.

⁸⁴ The Marathi poet, Jayarama Pindye keeps the first ten cantos of his "Dalliance of Radha and Krishna" (*Radha-madhava-vilasa*) composed in jaded Sanskrit completely separate from his innovative verses in eleven regional languages in the eleventh canto, which is as voluminous as the rest of this *champu* (genre that mixes prose and poetry). Kesavdas professes his own "dull-wittedness" (within his family circle of accomplished scholars), but does not hesitate to allude to his own status as the "best of poets" (within his Braj circle), thereby neither disparaging the value of his classical heritage nor minimising his own pioneering mastery of the new vernacular medium. Assimilation of and faithfulness to the Sanskrit tradition was the prerequisite qualification for radical experimentation outside of its jurisdiction; lack of aptitude and inclination in the top-heavy traditional universe – where systemic innovation was no longer within individual reach – could translate instead into a source of creativity in virgin territory.

⁸⁵ Whereas Abhinava had declined independent status to *bhakti* subsuming it within *eros*, the later Vaishnava theorists elevated devotion to God to the status of the supreme *rasa* embracing all the rest. The emerging and expanding class of Braj poets mediated between the lowly saint-singers, who sang without artifice of divine love, thus awakening and nourishing the religious impulse among the illiterate masses, and the brahmin elite, who monopolised and transmitted the secular theory, conventions, and practice of *rasa* in classical rhetoric. Similar hybrid sensibilities also developed in the other (including Dravidian) vernac-

compact allegorical expression even in dance-dramas written in that most Dravidian of languages, Tamil. Venkata Kavi's immensely popular composition "The waves surge, O Krishna!" evokes in turn – through its exquisite combination of melody, rhythm, and lyrics – *shringara*, *shanta*, and *bhakti* only to fuse them together within an inner alchemy of *rasa* that alludes to the awakening and transmutation of the serpent-power.⁸⁶ The blissfully enchanting flute that immobilises the senses, the midnight moon burning as at midday, knitting the eyebrows to focus within, the eyes rolling over as if in trance, dying for the climactic tryst in a secret bower, the divine child dancing on (the head of the multi-hooded serpent-of-the-deep emerging from) the sun-bathed waves of the ocean, chiding the neglectful Lover for shamelessly frolicking with those other women, the consuming desire to dangle helplessly as Krishna's earring in surrender to the movement of his flute, all this poignant imagery serves to

suggest (the song's hidden inspiration and finality in) *unio mystica*. Whereas Abhinava has drawn upon his own consummate realisation to describe directly in chaste and normative Sanskrit the transgressive techniques, inner processes, and aesthetic transformation effectuated by the "original sacrifice" (*adi-yaga*), and the vernacular poets have immortalised the amorous and heroic exploits of the dark-hued Flute-Player for the world at large, the ocean of *rasa* churned by this deceptively simple Tamil composition brings alive to our very senses the elegant manner in which the Hindu imagination translates carnal knowledge into self-sacrifice, esoteric tradition into popular devotion.⁸⁷ The intimate symbiosis of Vedic learning and vernacular diversity is perhaps best embodied by the *vidushaka*, who disputes in (enigmatic) Sanskrit in the ritual preliminaries but "jokes" only in "vulgar" Prakrit in the plays themselves.⁸⁸

ulars, but such eroticised *bhakti* had already been achieved long ago, within Sanskrit itself, in Jayadeva's twelfth-century *Gita-govinda*, on the eve of the literary efflorescence of the regional languages (see note 63 above).

⁸⁶ See the digest "From Abhinavagupta to Bollywood: 'the waves surge, O Krishna'" for my detailed exegesis of Venkata Subbaiyer's *Alai Payude* in the *raga* Kanada. This online dialogue (with Frank Burch Brown and others) juxtaposing various (Christian, Muslim, Roma, Bollywood, etc.) musical traditions serves as a vantage point for mutual appropriation among different religious and secular frameworks. Mani Ratnam's recent Tamil romantic hit movie takes its title from Venkata Kavi's song re-rendered by A. R. Rehman. <http://www.svabhinava.org/abhinava/Dialogues/AbhinavaBollywood-frame.htm>.

⁸⁷ Venkata Kavi was a life-long celibate who attributes his untaught musical genius and learning to the grace of his preferred divinity (*ishta-devata*), the child Krishna, whose initial vision at the Oothukadu shrine would have struck him unconscious. He was nevertheless well-versed in Tantric worship of the goddess to whom several of his compositions are dedicated. Separated by several centuries, the Carnatic composer may have perhaps never have heard of Abhinava, the musicologist, but both Tamil Vaishnava and Kashmiri Shaiva have sprouted from the same religio-aesthetic trunk to which the Oriya Jayadeva too belonged.

⁸⁸ The same alchemy of *rasa* is embodied by this "non-Vedic" (*avaidika*) "great Brahmin" – in whom Veda and Tantra coincide – through his insatiable hankering for food and sweetmeats (*modaka*).

✓ Muslim Allegories on the Taste of Love: Becoming God's Image

The sculptural representation of the otherwise transcendent Shiva as the "Lord of Dance" (*nata-rajā*) is ultimately the kinesthetic projection of the dynamic stillness of the Pashupata ascetic in a state of ecstatic trance. The underlying metaphysical principles continue to animate the emotional choreography that the professional (not just the temple-) dancer evokes for the delight and edification of her audiences.⁸⁹ Since so much of Hindu aesthetics revolves around the artistic representation of the human form whether as the protagonist of a worldly

drama or poem, in the image of a divinity to be worshipped, or hovering somewhere between the two as in the idealised narrative of Lord Rama,⁹⁰ the genealogy of religious aniconism and anthropomorphism in Indian civilisation assumes a central significance, especially in the subsequent light of the wholesale adoption of the *rasa-dhvani* canon by Muslim poets and musicians. The "polytheism" of the *Rg-vedic* hymns attributes vivid human traits even to key ritual elements like Fire (Agni), but the gods – even and especially the foremost among them, Indra their king⁹¹ – were adored through figures of speech and never in sculpted form. Though the

✓ ⁸⁹ The principle of "dynamic stillness" is embodied even within the fundamental units of dance (*karana*) that blend (a rapid sequence of) static postures (*avasthana*) with graceful (continuous) movement (*chari*). Abhinava clarifies Bharata's definition and enumeration of the *karanas* by demonstrating how the whole body of the dancer is transformed into a living icon (see Padma Subrahmanyam, in this volume). The still Void at the yogic heart of the cosmic ballet – in the sacred geography of (Tamil) Shaivism, the temple (-town), where the "chaotic" dance of creation and destruction takes place, is (called) "clad in Consciousness" (*chid-ambaram*) – is translated here into the balance and equipoise so "visible" in the dancer's pirouettes. Considering that our (sense of) limited personal identity is so rooted in the unceasing claims of the instinctual body, such complete mastery over and rhythmic coordination of its (even minor) "limbs" (neck, eyebrows, toes) amounts to a spiritual discipline equivalent to – despite being at the visual antipodes of – the immobile introversion of the ascetic: "the Self is the Dancer" (*nartaka atma, Shivasutra*).

Sculpturism ✓ ⁹⁰ Whereas the original Sanskrit epic of Valmiki depicts Lord Rama as an exemplary human hero with his divine dimension as an "incarnation" (*avatara*) of Vishnu relegated to the background, the Hindi *Ram-charitmanas* of Tulsidas transforms him into a deity to be worshipped. The participation of Muslims in the Ramnavami/Dashera celebrations based on the latter version (and the participation of Hindus in Muharram, etc.) has led some well-intentioned scholars to claim that the denominations of "Hindu" and "Muslim" were irrelevant (or simply did not exist) in pre-colonial India. A closer and impartial analysis would reveal that such "syncretic" practices – though providing the space for the emergence of fresh syntheses – were the arena for (sometimes intense) religious competition that could erupt into (even large-scale) communal conflict. See our case study of the Lat-Bhaira cult and the Benares riots of 1809 in the context of Ghazi Miyan in Sunthar Visuvalingam and Elizabeth Chaliier-Visuvalingam, *Bhairava in Benares: Negotiating Sacred Space and Religious Identities* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2005). The debate around the theses advanced in this section are available in the online digest: "Idolatry, iconoclasm, and aesthetics of the human form: Becoming God's image in the Mirror of (Self-) Recognition" at <http://www.svabhinava.org/abhinava/Dialogues/AnthropomorphismIconoclasm-frame.htm>.

⁹¹ The only sculptures of Indra that have come down to us in Nepal are not from the "Vedic" culture of the Licchavis – when royal sacrifices are known to have been performed – but from the late Transitional period, when the country was considered to be Buddhist.

Buddha was a wholly human prince of the sixth century BC, the "Enlightened One" was visually represented in devotional art for five centuries primarily through symbols like the vacant throne, footprints, parasol, tree, and/or the spinning Wheel of the Law. The gradual concessions to the demands of lay devotion notwithstanding, the central focus of Buddhist predication, endeavour, and practice was not the adoration of his personhood but the intangible principle of its self-dissolution into the Void (*nirvana*).⁹² Even at the height of the *bhakti* period, the image of Brahma as the third member of the Hindu Trinity did not as a rule receive worship in temples, which the Puranic myths account for through a curse that devalorises this "arrogant" creator-god before Vishnu and Shiva as the supreme objects of devotion. The real reason, however, is that the prior

brahmanical ideology that still underpins Hindu *bhakti* accords no independent status or even reality to the gods who were mere cogs in the sacrificial machinery.⁹³ Though the late Vajrayana Buddhists similarly end up multiplying their (Bhairava-like ferociously erotic) deities to a degree that would bewilder most god-fearing Hindus, they are systematically reduced to insubstantial creations and reflections of one's own nature as the Supreme Void (*shunya*). The mystic physiology of the yogic body, the accompanying tantric techniques, the esoteric language (*sandha-bhasha*) used to communicate such truths (only) to the initiated, and this celebration of the alchemy of *rasa* that proliferated across sectarian lines within popular religion, is embodied in the "Nectar of Immortality" (*amrita-kunda*) attributed to Gorakhnath.⁹⁴ The Hindavi literature of Awadh at its

⁹² As for the ongoing controversy as to whether there had in fact been a (tacit) prohibition against images of the Buddha, the pedagogic strategy of the earlier narrative friezes that depict a vacant space at the center of adoration is maintained, even in South-East Asia, well after the efflorescence of his anthropomorphic representations. The pre-first-century *bodhisattva* (Buddha-in-the-making) images confirm (rather than refute) this doctrinal rationale behind the refusal to transform Buddha(hood) into tangible divinity (see Michael Rabe). Susan L. Huntington's argument that these friezes do not depict (scenes from the life of) the Buddha, but the contemporary lay adoration of such symbols, fails to explain their primacy from the very beginning. By functioning simultaneously on both registers, the artistic representation collapses the time interval so as to make the (life of the invisible) Buddha present to the pilgrims at these sites. The real issue here is not so much that of anthropomorphism versus aniconism, but that of conserving, transmitting, and diffusing the Buddha's "Awakening" at the risk of deformation.

⁹³ Though Maitreya, the *vidushaka* in the "Little Clay Cart" (*Mricchakatika*), complies with his brahmin friend's wish to leave the offerings at the crossroads for the goddesses, he makes it a point to complain: "What's the use of worshipping the divinities? They don't listen anyway!" The "prohibition" of images is not peculiar to the monotheistic cultures (it is not just the Catholics in Europe but even the Muslims in India who have found ingenious "theological" solutions to get around the interdiction). It may be recognised as a powerful (not just Western) tendency, already within a pagan context, in a philosopher-mystic like Plato: art as being engrossed in the shadow of an already "imaginary" world in the (allegory of the) Cave.

⁹⁴ This esoteric knowledge was so highly treasured by the Sufis that translations of this "text" were made into Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Turkish (the Mevlevi fraternity of "dancing dervishes" could ascribe it to ibn-Al Arabi, the Islamic counterpart of Abhinavagupta!), and even Hebrew, and openly acclaimed as the most

height had systematically assimilated not only this entire range of mystical content and understanding but also gave ornate expression to that perennial quest for perfection through the medium of epic romances that resorted to erotic love and sensuous descriptions as allegories for the fusion of the human soul with the Divine.⁹⁵ Such achievements had been prepared for by the meticulous translation, avid reception, and experiments in the application of Sanskritic texts on music, *dhvani*, and *rasa* already during the Delhi Sultanate, and by attempts to delineate, negotiate, and bridge the gulf between Persian-Islamic and Hindu literary genres, conventions, and tastes. The ideal listener to such prurient recitations was designated as the Sufi novice whose heart was focussed on transmuting the (otherwise) "worldly" emotions evoked into the elixir of divine love (*prem*) for the Lover who lay behind all name and form. Skill in Koranic exegesis was not

just a religious but an aesthetic prerequisite for full appreciation because the crisscrossing waves of meaning generated by this wide confluence of the two rivers of literary allusion and hermeneutics traversed and played upon multiple registers, such that inherited Indian themes and imagery could begin to resonate with Islamic revelation, learning, pursuits, and sensibilities.⁹⁶ Though such hybrid creativity received much impetus and motivation from the competitive milieu – not just between Hindu and Muslim genealogies, but also among rival Sufi sects, and amidst individual sheikhs – and often served to proselytise, the net result was a shared aesthetics and an emerging synthesis that transformed both the tributary religious cultures. Hindu divinities, like Shiva and Krishna, could intervene to narrate the secrets of bodily perfection or become the recipient of unbounded love, against the canvas of (not just Islamic)

valuable "book" of (but yet to be discovered in) India. Though many of the more alien (i.e., specifically Hindu) details were often suppressed, re-contextualised, and/or substituted with Islamic equivalents for the consumption of Muslim novices (especially outside of India), the true provenance and meaning were often known to the redactors (as confirmed by the existence of multiple versions, with and without censorship, from the same hand).

⁹⁵ My following observations on the new Indo-Persian aesthetic sensibility are based on notes and hand-outs from the lectures in Paris of Aditya Behl (June 2005) on "Shadows of Paradise: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379-1545." His ongoing studies of (the audiences of) Hindavi literature (and music) focus on Malik Muhammad Jayasi's *Padmavat* and Mir Sayyid Manjhan Shattari's *Madhumalati* through the crosshairs of Abhinava's aesthetics, Persian genres (*masnavi*) and sensibilities, tantric conception of the body, and skill in Koranic exegesis. The *Padmavat* won such acclaim among connoisseurs that the poet Ala'oul rendered it into (highly Sanskritised) Bengali for the delectation of his Muslim patrons at the Arakan court in eastern Burma.

⁹⁶ Conversely, Hindu poets could extend the resources of the Sanskritic *alamkara-shastra* to celebrate significant secular developments in contemporary Indo-Muslim society. Kesavdas, for example, wrote an elaborate panegyric in Brajhasha of emperor Jehangir, using puns and other stock rhetorical devices to equate his court with that of Indra. See Allison Busch's treatment of his *Jahangir-jas-chandrika* in her article on "Literary Responses to the Mughal Imperium: The Historical Poems of Kesavdas" in *South Asia Research* (25 [2005]: 31-54).

self-annihilation (*fana*).⁹⁷ At the height of the Kula "sacrifice," the body itself is experienced not only as the supreme (aniconic) *linga*, but as the abode of all the (anthropomorphised) gods.

Devotional worship amounts, in the Pratyabhijna doctrine, to externalising the self through the objectified image of the chosen deity upon the Void (of Consciousness) so as to better realise and dissolve within the non-dual Principle.⁹⁸ With his prodigious ability to assimilate and synthesise "ever-new" approaches to the Ultimate Reality, Abhinava it seems to me, would have readily "recognised" (*praty-abhijna*) himself in this Indo-Muslim universe in construction.⁹⁹

Banarasipan as "Intoxicated" (*Masti*) State of Spiritual Autonomy

With the right mix of cultural orientations, aesthetic sensibility can permeate the "ordinary" life of the

masses well beyond those restricted circles where it is nourished, cultivated, and refined through the formal techniques of the fine arts. The day-to-day ethos (*banarasi-pan*) of Banaras, the holy city of the Hindus, had long been characterised by a feeling of gentle "intoxication" (*mauj, masti*) that takes an eccentric delight in simple pleasures such as the chewing of betel-leaves (*pan*), bathing in the Ganga, going on an outing (*babri alang*) on an unpredictable whim, consumption of marijuana (*bhang*), etc., that extended to all age-groups, castes, and religious denominations. The cultural justification for such carefree behaviour in this centre of Hindu orthodoxy was that such a life-style was modelled on the patron deity of the city, namely the ascetic Shiva.¹⁰⁰ Spirituality is not confined to places of worship but permeates the entire public space as calls to prayer, devotional songs, murmuring

⁹⁷ The rapidly expanding Islam was imposed upon or embraced by Buddhistic currents in Iran, Central Asia, and eventually India, no doubt providing a powerful impetus for the development and consolidation of the ideal of "self-annihilation" among (not just the newly converted) Sufis, the forerunners among whom hailed from outside the Arabian peninsula. What's distinctive about *fana* is precisely its reworking into an Islamic theism that insists on the transcendence of God: I'd find its inner "orthogenetic" precedent in the first intimation of the Koran – which was already likened to an experience of death – by archangel Gabriel to the sleeping Prophet.

⁹⁸ Instead of being stuck in the rut of idolatry versus iconoclasm, we would make real progress in our understanding of the treatment of anthropomorphism in art if we looked more closely at the inevitable tension between symbol and reality already inherent in the (divine) image, and the (religious constraints on the) different strategies at work behind the scenes.

⁹⁹ After the twelfth century in Kashmir itself, the "elitist" Sanskrit legacy of Trika non-dualism was inherited and generalised at the popular level by the Muslim Rishi tradition through luminaries like Nuruddin in close spiritual symbiosis with Hindu ascetics like Lalla.

¹⁰⁰ The Hindi devotional song (*bhajan*) in Darbari Kanada, a favourite of Sai Baba and greatly popularised among the Indian diaspora in South-East Asia by Swami Shantananda, goes: "Repeat the name of Ram with a heart full of love (*prem*), *shri ra-ma-ra-ma-ram, shri ra-ma ra-ma-ram, shri ra-ma-ra-ma-ram* [...]. The name of that *mantra*, which is ever on the lips of the Great God (Shiva), is Ram; Ram's name alone confers liberation on those who die in Benares" (*kashi marat mukti karat*).

of pilgrims thronging the streets. Inner detachment was also fostered by the omni-presence of Death that constantly walks the alleys with piercing cries of "Ram's name (alone) Is!" on its predestined tryst with the undying funerary pyres at the burning *ghats* in the very heart of the "City of Light" (Kashi).¹⁰¹ Moreover, under the watchful eyes of Bhairava, Banaras was earlier the centre of transgressive Shaiva currents such as the Kapalikas and Pashupatas, who sought spiritual autonomy by deliberately and publicly violating social conventions. Over the centuries, these seemingly contrary attitudes have mingled, filtered into, and become homogenised as it were within the down-to-earth sensibilities of the local

populace, including merchants and scholars, so as to shape their temperament.¹⁰² An attitude of inner autonomy (*svatantrya*) – that could self-organise politically as in the spontaneous yet peaceful civil disobedience against the House-Tax of 1813 just after the imposition of British rule¹⁰³ – especially characterised the (mostly poor) Muslim artisans, who would stop working at their looms to take a boat to the other side of the Ganga whenever they felt like it even if this meant a diminution of income. This "permissive" ethos is what made traditional Banaras such a hospitable place during the seventies for hordes of Western hippies who felt crushed by the "heartlessness" of their

¹⁰¹ The story is that the repentant robber Valmiki was instructed to redeem himself by sitting under a tree to unceasingly repeat "*Mara, mara*" – another name for the god of Death – which naturally became his epic hero "*Rama*" (the Hindu king is identified with Yama-Dharmaraja). This quintessential character of the city of the dying could have a disconcerting – sometimes visibly traumatising – effect on Westerners, even those otherwise intellectually equipped to understand Hindu traditions, shielded at home till then from (the inevitability of) death. Playing upon the word *chiti*, meaning both "funeral pyre" and (the light of) "consciousness", Abhinava "figuratively" locates the blissful experience of the *kula-yaga* – the source of his highest realisations – in the "great cremation ground" (as Benares is also called).

¹⁰² A couple of striking examples: I was intrigued for years by the familiar sight around Assi Ghat of a dignified, dark-hued, and wholly naked (Jain?) ascetic strolling amidst the indifferent crowd or travelling seated on a cycle-rickshaw through the main thoroughfare adorned only with a pair of tinted sunglasses, shoes, and a black umbrella. Similarly, one of the three witnesses at our marriage – he also performed at our request the modest fire ceremony for tying the knot – was a senior professor at the Geology Department, who had the habit of walking around the BHU campus and surrounding main streets well after midnight exclaiming praises of Lord Shiva (and occasionally pounding on our door at around 2.00 a.m.). Though he had only the least interest in "Kashmir Shaiva" texts, he was the only person that my teacher had ever declared as being a naturally "perfect one" (*siddha*).

¹⁰³ This "passive resistance" (*satyagraha*) a century before Gandhi and without the charisma of a single leader was spearheaded by the lowest, especially untouchable, classes and the fiercely caste-conscious Muslim weavers, and all in the name of protecting the traditional privileges of brahmins and fakirs. The political implications of *svatantrya* need to be drawn out for our own times in the context of a re-evaluation of caste, as guaranteeing the real exercise of a degree of group autonomy, and of Indian kingship. Abhinava, in accordance with the meaning of tantric (royal) "consecration" (*abhisheka*), resorts to the image of the "autocrat" as embodying "individual" autonomy (not oppressive domination over others). See also Makarand Paranjape's account of his encounter with a proudly humble rickshaw-driver in Benares (*Evam* 3 [2004]).

own industrialised societies.¹⁰⁴

Gradually over the years, many of them weaned themselves of their (drug and other) addictions, mastered some art-form such as dance, music, painting, etc., studied a branch of traditional knowledge, and/or assimilated a spiritual discipline of their preference, and eventually returned home to reintegrate as productive and even creative members of their countries of origin.¹⁰⁵ My own teacher of "Kashmir Shaivism," an extremely orthodox Mithila brahmin and very learned (not only) in Advaita Vedanta, would proceed

after our sessions to the banks of the Ganga where, floating high on *bhang*, he would remain immersed in spiritual contemplation (*samadhi*).¹⁰⁶ His daily words of parting were the benediction: "remain wholly intoxicated" (*khub mast rabo*)!¹⁰⁷ Aesthetic sensibility opens the "doors of perception" to experience well beyond the confines of art.

Is Abhinavagupta Still Relevant to the Emerging Global Aesthetics?

In Abhinava's aesthetics, we thus discover a supple conceptual and experiential synthesis¹⁰⁸ that exhibits

¹⁰⁴ More generally, many Western travellers (as opposed to tourists) are even now attracted to India for the simple experience of soaking in this aesthetic ambience that they find difficult to formulate intellectually or even to account for in terms of the (often distressing, sometimes repulsive) particulars of everyday experience. A French expatriate couple – not spiritually inclined in any regular sense, the husband is a nuclear physicist – whom we know in Chicago spend their vacations to simply "being" in India, though they speak none of its languages and know very little factually and conceptually of its complex traditions.

¹⁰⁵ In the early 1970s, there was a mounting influx across the overland route of Westerners, many of them without regular papers and little money. Despite pressure exercised on the Indian government by the urban bourgeoisie in Delhi and elsewhere to stem the "corrupting" tide, Indira Gandhi adamantly refused, declaring that the nation had always been hospitable to refugees of all sorts, whether political or cultural.

¹⁰⁶ Rameshwar Jha's contention was that, for the spiritually inclined, the ingestion of *cannabis* facilitated natural repose and delight in one's true inner nature; the wealthy brahmin jewellers who hosted my teacher in Benares would regularly consume *bhang* dissolved in milk with him. My only experience with this concoction – my teacher, never one to push anything down my throat, often indulged my curiosity – resulted in my throwing up at home and falling into a deep sleep from which I feared never being able to wake up!

¹⁰⁷ The notion of (Hindi) *masti* has the semantic range of Sanskrit *matta* (from the root *-mad*) meaning "intoxicated, drunk, amorous, mad, and/or elated." Elizabeth had originally come to Benares to work on her PhD on the "crazy" (*unmatta*-) Bhairava to answer the question: how come Hindus worship such "mad" divinities whereas she had been taught in Paris by Michel Foucault that Western Reason had constructed itself through the systematic banishment, imprisonment, and clinical pathologisation of folly. We were subsequently visited by French ethno-psychoanalysts researching madness in India. Our friend, Jacques Vigne, for example, came to Benares to study the guru-disciple relationship and ended up renouncing a promising career in psychiatry back home to become an ardent disciple of Mata Anandamayi.

¹⁰⁸ K. Krishnamoorthy (in this volume) highlights this uniquely integrated understanding of the (not just aesthetic) tradition with well-chosen examples and corrections – based on parallel readings in other unpublished manuscripts – to corrupt text-places in his two commentaries. Such errors have crept in, it had often seemed to me, especially where the Indian scribes have had difficulty making sense of Abhinava's analyses, subtle enough even for one familiar with his philosophical and tantric outlook. Only a well-coordinated interdisciplinary effort that goes beyond a mere collection of disparate articles could do justice to (all that) Abhinava (represents).

apparent "inconsistencies" only because it pushes the envelope of human possibilities simultaneously in several contrary directions. His familiarity with the practical performance-oriented details of music, dance, poetry, and theatre in the context of the theoretical controversies of his own times, is abundantly attested.¹⁰⁹ Such a unifying framework was possible largely because the surrounding traditional culture shared a common discourse whatever one's particular position or choices

within its available range of values.¹¹⁰ Contemporary ("Western") culture is defined instead by a fragmentation of not just theory but also of the corresponding practice and the resulting experience. Unlike the carefully delimited "transgressive sacrality" that hid behind and inspired Abhinava's experience of aesthetic rapture, artistic expression today seems to leap forward through a perpetual movement of trespassing its own unstable norms.¹¹¹ What has been problematised is not just

day at Southern
109 This is reflected in his perceptive comments on a dazzling range of otherwise obscure and controversial topics, such as phonetic texture, musical notes, dance sequences, language use, authoritative pronouncements that extend beyond aesthetics into the particularities of different tantric traditions. Whereas recent Western scholarship in both domains has attempted to project the image of a theoretician reading his own "rationalisations" into the craft of practitioners of art and religion, all the evidence indicates instead that his capacity for abstraction made him all the more keenly attuned to significant details, connections, and rationales missed by lesser minds.

Chitra mind
110 When Pollock (see notes 47 and 73 above) raised the question at the end of his second lecture on "The Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns (*prachina-navya-vivada*) and the End of Sanskrit Literary Theory," as to why the innovators (*navya*) won the day in France but lost out in India, his host at the Collège de France, Gérard Fussman, suggested that the answer might be rather simple: France was a sovereign nation that fully and proudly assumed its own traditions (even after and despite the Revolution), whereas the Hindu polity had become the "subject" of an (alien religious tradition under the) Mughal dispensation. Pollock rightly pointed out that the reasons had to be much deeper than that because several Muslim sovereigns and patrons – such as Zain-ul-abidin, Akbar, Asaf Khan – had actually attempted to promote and even revive Sanskrit learning only to be thwarted by the closure of the brahmin mind. Similarly, when C. Rajendran concluded his subsequent talk on "Sanskrit in Contemporary India: Evolution and Status" (26 May 2005) in Paris, by citing fruitful instances of Hindu-Muslim interaction in music, the arts, devotional religion, etc., I pointed out that such symbioses took place mostly at the popular level and in the vernaculars, whereas the Sanskrit tradition had remained resolutely aloof. The obvious reason, it seems to me, is that, unlike their home-grown Buddhist interlocutors of the previous millennium, the challenge of the Koran-based knowledge systems came from without and had its roots in alien sources, unfamiliar modes of thinking, and radically divergent values. It is only now, through modern (largely Western) scholarship, that Hindus can better understand and appreciate (not only) Islamic traditions (but even the "skewed" systemicity of their own inheritance).

111 The socio-religious hierarchy of the "legitimate goals of life" (*purushartha*) was considered problematic already in the traditional didactic (and even within the same family!), as exemplified by the Mahabharata debate where each of the Pandava brothers extols, in turn, the supremacy of only one: *kama* (the warrior Bhima), *artha* (the royal Arjuna), *dharma* (the "brahmin" Yudhisthira). Similarly, Bhoja's "erotic non-dualism" (*shringaradvaita*) derives from the observation that all these pursuits, including the quest of the world-weary for liberation (*mumukshu* in the "desiderative" form of the verb), are driven by desire. Those clamouring for a "Hindutva" restoration of the (increasingly politicised) *Dharma* in "secular" India might take note that the epic describes (the ways of) this "Order" as being hidden in an unfathomable cave.

the content and technique of art but also the boundaries between aesthetics and everything else.¹¹² Not only does the artist express his “personal” (as opposed to received social) values but the medium also becomes the vehicle of contestation and now serves non-aesthetic purposes.¹¹³ Conversely, other modes of life, like the religious or the commercial, likewise cultivate, in good

taste or bad, only specific possibilities of art to further their own agendas. Artists have also responded by barricading themselves into an “aestheticism” that’s supposedly immune to all other considerations, whether moral, political, religious, pedagogic, or even that of simply affording delight.¹¹⁴ New media, such as cinema, television, (multimedia on) the Internet, have emerged that

¹¹² Historically, the emergence and consolidation of Indian aesthetics must be replaced within the larger matrix of the parallel evolution of other semi-autonomous domains such as philosophy, law, “sectarian” religion, and so on, from the mythico-ritual roots of the Vedic tradition, wherein these disciplines are not clearly distinguished. Neither the *Rg-vedic* “poems” nor even classical epic poetry, with its long stretches of descriptive verse and didactic intent, can be satisfactorily accounted for in terms of *rasa*-theory, whereas one discovers abundant use of figures of speech and sound-effects. Of the ten forms of drama (*dasha-rupaka*) enunciated by Bharata, several seem to have been of ritual orientation and have as such been lost (so that we may only guess at their nature), whereas others have survived only at the cost of profound transformations that reflect the critical mentality and “secular” urbanity that came with far-reaching socio-cultural change.

¹¹³ Pursuing his initial comparison between the divergent fate of the Brahmanical and French “innovators” (*navyas*), Pollock (see notes 47, 110, and 73 above) summed up (the last of) his four talks (“Political Thought in Early Modern India,” 5 April 2005) with the claim that the ultimate reason for the stagnation and sclerosis of Sanskrit knowledge systems – this inability or refusal to engage in a style of thought that looks for new questions rather than simply more precision to the formulation of older ones – would be the socio-political “revolution” that never happened. Referring to the growing discourse on Asian values and alternative paths to modernity, I expressed my surprise that never once in the course of his lecture-series had he raised the question of the “individual” – so central to Louis Dumont’s systematic comparison between traditional societies, exemplified above all by India, and the modern West – who is rooted in a specifically Christian (re-) formulation of religious faith. How otherwise, I asked, do we account for the historical fact that the geographical cradle of the modern world was Europe? In retrospect, the human costs and continuing legacy of these (Jeffersonian, Robespierrian, Stalinist, Hitlerian, Maoist, Khomeinian, and now Ladenian) “revolutions” seem dubious (to say the least), and “communist” China’s successful modernisation is accompanied by a return to (neo-) Confucianist values. In the face of Western encroachment, Chinese intellectuals are turning again to Indian (not just Buddhist) knowledge systems as a resource for revitalising their socio-cultural order. See <http://www.svabhinava.org/IndoChina/TanChung/default.htm>.

I would simply add here that a specifically Indian formulation of “individual” creativity is available in Abhinava’s insistence on (spiritual) “autonomy” (*svatantrya*).

¹¹⁴ There is a vicious cycle here: the reigning confusion and nihilism obliges the artist to create his own meaning, restructure his little world, and so doing justify his life at least to himself; but he thereby adds his own voice to the growing cacophony. Hence, (contemporary reworkings of) ancient Gnostic traditions that had cast life-in-this-world in the darkest shade of a prison, combined with elements of Eastern esoteric traditions, continue to exercise a strong appeal on such circles. Dusan Pajin (in this volume) shows, with the example of Marcel Proust, how Platonic *anamnesis*, elaborated into a sophisticated technique of *aham-bhava* in Abhinava’s Trika, is particularly adapted to this “existentialist” dilemma. G. I. Gurdjieff placed such “self-remembering” at the heart of his own esoteric teaching and practice in the last century.

challenge some of the basic presuppositions of traditional art (for example, that of a localised as opposed to virtual community) and offer tantalising (for example, remote interactive) possibilities yet to be adequately explored. Fuelling all these cross-currents of innovation are large doses of theory and practice being injected through the exposure to non-Western cultures, with their own indigenous forms of aesthetic sensibility, which likewise cannot be reduced to *rasa* or even *dhvani* in its canonical formulations. While various classical Indian art-forms, such as music and dance, find an increasingly receptive audience world-wide, they are also being rethought, extended, and transformed even in India itself through the experiments of (some of the foremost) indigenous artists often in collaboration with representatives of such contemporary trends.¹¹⁵ So long as the language of art depends on the powers of signification and especially in their ability to evoke, fathom, and transform human emotions, the Indian legacy remains an incomparable resource for

the aesthetics of the future.

Abhinavagupta himself lives in our consciousness not so much as an artist *stricto sensu* but as a discriminating commentator, connoisseur, and veritable doctor.¹¹⁶ The deepening crisis of values further exacerbated by the "clash of civilisations" is in need not so much of even more art-forms with their conflicting rules, theories, and subjectivities, but rather of a shared aesthetic sensibility that extends to the whole of life. Here, it seems to me, is Abhinava's greatest contribution to our world.

Bisociative Insights: Enigmatic Humour and Internet Pedagogy

Given the increasing fragmentation and contestation of so much of contemporary human knowledge due to the dissolution of barriers to mass communication among the various religio-cultural traditions – as manifested in and exemplified by the ubiquitous Internet, the modern Tower of Babel – these traditions now need to be systematically juxtaposed, read against the grain, and problematised so

¹¹⁵ The aesthetic sensibility of Indian cinema – despite its eclectic reception of musical, dance, and other elements from all over the world – remains in many ways, particularly in its "sentimentality," a contemporary prolongation of classical "Sanskrit" theatre (which could be deeply esoteric and yet exercise mass "box-office" appeal). Bollywood might find an incomparable intellectual resource here in its growing challenge to Hollywood.

¹¹⁶ In the same way, the highest-paid among the priestly "labourers" (*shram*) of the Vedic sacrifice (*yajna*) was the "do-nothing" *brahman* who silently – with an occasional nod of approval (AUM) – contemplated the (hidden connections being established within the) ritual drama unfolding before his eyes. Though without a PhD, he was also called the "doctor" (*bhishaj*) of the sacrifice, because he alone knew enough to "heal" the inevitable mistakes. I've shown in my own "doctorate" that the *vidushaka* is the transposition of the same function within the play. For the philosopher (Plato) as physician curing the people of the ill-effects of earlier remedies, see the musings of my "Nietzschean" friend Joseph Martin: "Mediating the Opposites – East meets West: Philosophy as Cultural Critique and Remedial Dialogue" (digest of online dialogue).

as to extract fresh insights and principles for the global future. Abhinava offers four casual observations on the nature of (Indian) humour (*basya*) that had been relegated to minor, even trivial, status because it does not directly further the legitimate goals of life. Taken together, the assertions that "the semblance of any emotion becomes *basya*" and "all the emotions are included in *basya*" are explicable only in terms of a bisociative theory of humour as deriving from the aestheticisation of the mutual neutralisation of two sharply opposing emotions whose energies would normally be released through the reflex of laughter: humour is thus not a "simple" unitary feeling but a cognitive structure where the associative field is split down the middle between mutually incompatible emotional responses. That the "semblance of humour likewise becomes humour" and that "so too does the clown deploy the semblance of humour" (*basyabbasa*), this joint claim is possible only where such playful and ridiculous nonsense serves as the sustained but opaque vehicle for a hidden ritual meaning and purpose.

Through the "incongruous" connections (*bandhu*) that he repeatedly establishes between things and domains that have (apparently) nothing to do with each other, the ("great") brahmin (*mahabrahmana*) Fool becomes – as I have shown – the comic expounder upon the world-stage of the (secret of the) Vedic enigma (*brahman*).¹¹⁷ Going all the way in applying Abhinava's insights with the help of modern studies – on Indian civilisation as a whole and on the cross-cultural anthropology of ritual laughter – we arrive not only at the realisation that the *vidushaka* is the institutionalised violator of brahmanical norms but, more generally, at a dialectical conception of traditional order as revolving around the principle of transgression. Abhinavagupta-Bhairava himself embodies this paradox of being the champion of the traditional (*purushartha*) order who nevertheless attributes his highest realisations to the systematic violation of this sacralised order. Whereas the brahmin clown drew upon a shared mythico-ritual universe and value system to crack his often

¹¹⁷ This resolves another of the many puzzles of the theatrical preliminaries (*purvaranga*), the sudden and unexplained appearance of an actor called the "institutor" (*sthapaka*), who assumes the guise of the stage-manager (*sutradhara*) to usher in the (first character of the) first Act of the play proper: for example, the "friendly" *vidushaka* Maitreya lamenting (like our pot-bellied Ganesha?) the loss of his *modakas* in the *Mricchakatika*. The *sthapaka* would have been a logistical device to free up the real Sutradhara (Brahma) to appear in the play himself as the *Vidushaka*. This (good-for-nothing) "great brahmin" is indeed the seasoned "joker" (*narma-vid*) who "knows" how to "pierce" and weave together the "vital joints" (*narma-vidh*) of the sacrificial play through his "incongruous" remarks. The stage-manager is so-called, not simply because of his sacred-cord (*yajnopavita*); rather, it is he who "holds" (*-dhara* from the root *dhri*) and spins together the invisible thread (*sutra*) not only of the profane narrative but above all of the (noose of the) sacrificial "plot" (of which his dear friend Charudatta ends up the pre-designated victim). This behind-the-scenes "wire-puller" projects himself as the indispensable companion and chief resource of the hero. In the Prologue to this "Little Clay Cart", the Sutradhara is famished and insists, in Sanskrit, on being feasted by his wife-actress, before switching to Prakrit "for the purpose of the play." Of course, were he here on stage before us today, this "weaver of enigmas" (*brahma-bandhu*) would be spinning his "yarns" by synthesising disparate threads from multiple Internet forums (*sabha*)!

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violation
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unintelligible (sometimes even to the initiated!) jokes on the profane stage, the contemporary confusion and demise of ideologies as a whole is inimical to any form of exposition and dialogue that insists – in the manner of the philosophers – on starting from (supposedly) “first” principles. More effective is the immediate, abrupt, and elliptical projection of highly condensed cognitive “knots” (*bandhu* – from *badh* “to bind”)¹¹⁸ in the form of outrageous questions, improbable analogies, juxtaposition of disparate domains, unexpected turns of thought, reversal of values, and so on, that challenge, titillate, and otherwise engage a most varied audience even if initially (only)

because of their (apparent) humour. The “joke”¹¹⁹ thus becomes the intriguing focus for a collaborative effort in unwinding its multiple strands of meaning through layered commentary that draws upon more conventional (bibliographic, etc.) knowledge resources. Such a practice would renew with an entire Indian tradition – starting from Abhinavagupta’s pronouncements on humour, through the nonsense of the clown and the witty expositions of the riddle play (*vithi*), back to the Vedic enigma-contests (*brahmodya*) – by compressing its history and dissolving the boundaries between genres,¹²⁰ even while opening it up to the contemporary and increasingly

¹¹⁸ The sacred knot, depicted in art across so many prehistoric cultures, is best understood as the primitive representation of the neural node as the fundamental unit of knowledge, and wisdom was the facility with which the sage was able to untie and retie the thread. Whereas Alexander, that paragon of Western civilisation and future (short-lived) ruler of Asia, claimed to have “solved” the Gordian Knot by simply chopping through it with his triumphant sword (like many a present-day Indologist?), the *vidushaka* excels, like an incorrigible Indian boy-scout (*dushta-batuka*) at amusing himself, and others, by “re-solving” one riddle only to metamorphose it into another.

¹¹⁹ Some of the most significant Western contributors to humour theory were primarily interested in serious matters: Bergson in laughter’s role in chastising infractions against social norms; Freud in jokes (like dreams) as the royal road to the workings of the unconscious; Koestler in bisociation as the key to the secret of creativity; and Gurdjieff in tapping into the economy of energy within the duality of our psychosomatic existence. More than a mere symptom, humour could just as well serve as a therapeutic device – especially when deployed across the Internet – for interactively rewiring our neural networks. I began introspectively scrutinising my own internal mechanisms of laughter so deeply that I had already lost my sense of humour before arriving in India: thanks to Abhinava’s revelation of *hasyabhasa*, I now laugh and pretend to be serious at the same time.

¹²⁰ Already extinct by Abhinava’s time, the *vithi* appears, in the light of the definitions of its various elements (*vithyanga*), to have been a riddle-play, drawing inspiration from the verbal jousts of the assembly hall (*sabha*) and eventually going back to the Vedic enigma-contests (*brahmodya*). The only way Abhinava is able to vindicate this category is to “aestheticise” our understanding of these elements by finding illustrations, mostly in vernacular (Prakrit), of such verbal wit and linguistic ambiguity in the sentimental (often humorous) repartees of the love-dramas (*natika*). Defined in terms of the “verbal” (*bharati*) “style” (*vrutti*), the *vithi* must have originally been enacted by male characters in Sanskrit. The clown’s “refutation” (*vidushana*) indeed resorts to several of these *vithyanga*s in Sanskrit during the “three men’s talk” (*trigata*), enacted as part of the ritual preliminaries. Abhinava’s commentarial strategy, however, does suggest that such riddling mechanisms had penetrated (the dialogue of) all the dramatic genres, which may be confirmed by independent analysis of plays such as the “Little Clay Cart.”

interconnected world. We thus become active participants in a collective exercise in disjointed, proliferating, open-ended, cumulative, and “ever-renewed” (*abhi-nava!*) sense-making, that is as entertaining as it is mutually instructive, therapeutic, and self-transforming. The best – and perhaps the only – way to clarify and preserve Indian tradition (and not just in aesthetics), it seems to me, is to keep extending it creatively. As the “doctor” said, “use it or lose it!”

II

Consciousness, Self and Other: Universalisation in Abhinava's Theory of *Rasa*

*This Life's dim Windows of the Soul
Distorts the Heavens from Pole to Pole
And leads you to Believe a Lie
When you see with, not thro, the Eye.*

William Blake,
The Everlasting Gospel

The enjoyment of aesthetic emotion (*rasa*) is a paradox that posed a challenge to Indian philosophical speculation that on the whole postulated an opposition, or at least a sharp dichotomy, between consciousness and its manifold objects.¹²¹ Even the non-dualist schools like Vijñānavāda and Advaita Vedānta were more concerned with providing an

epistemo-ontological foundation for modes of spiritual realisation predicated on the “purification” or separation of a static consciousness from its possible contents, both physical and especially psychic, than in accounting for its creativity or at least for the manner in which it positively shapes its contents. So much so that any discussion of its inherent intentionality and possible dynamism was skewed by their relegation and assimilation to the extraneous realm of contaminating desire. By straddling the divide however, aesthetic rapture – as exemplified by the phenomenology of *rasa* – demands a more integrated analysis of experience than allowed for by conceptual frameworks based upon such “ascending” modes of realisation that debase all activity (or, on the contrary, upon a materialist reduction of all consciousness to a mere epiphenomenon). The status of self-awareness (regardless of the metaphysical existence or otherwise of the Self) encapsulates this problematic: on the one hand the extroverted spectator is wholly immersed in the make-believe world of passion that unfolds on the external stage (that is, they are doubly removed from Absolute Reality), on the other hand the mundane self is thereby effortlessly suspended to the point that the experience has been likened to the introverted relish of the transcendent

¹²¹ The online debate at the Abhinavagupta forum over Ian Whicher's attempt to (re-) interpret the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition from a world-affirming (as opposed to the traditional world-negating) perspective provided an opportunity to clarify persistent misunderstandings of the meaning of “universalisation” (*sadharanikarana*) in Sanskrit aesthetics. Ian Whicher's presentation, “Countering World Negation: World Affirming and Integrative Dimension of Classical Yoga,” to the Indic Colloquium (July 2002) is available at http://www.infinityfoundation.com/indic_colloq/papers/paper_whicher2.pdf.

reality, and even celebrated as a foretaste of or akin to the bliss of the absolute Brahman.

Emotion as Bondage in the Indian Philosophy of Ascent

The mundane experience of self is conditioned by a cluster of interdependent parameters such as a distinct subjectivity (*pramatr*) vis-à-vis others, situated-ness within a space-time (*desha-kala*) continuum that constitutes the necessary field of practical activity or at least of a purposive attitude towards the world. The finitude of our body, as the source of all our perceptions and as the instrument through which we affect our environment, is thus reflected in our emotional states and the thoughts they engender bearing (however tenuously) upon our self-preservation and self-aggrandisement. Anger, for example, is a permanent emotional disposition (*sthaiyī-bhava*) that presupposes an interactive opposition between my individual subjectivity ("first person") to an offending other ("second person"), and is sustained by a stream of distress at perceived past wrongs interspersed with the anticipative pleasure of retaliation. The obvious way to escape this constricting vicious circle of thought and activity is to analyse the anger dispassionately at its source so as to weaken its hold and eventually renounce it. As exemplified by the early Buddhist dissections of the "personality," Indian "psychology" has thus focussed on the deconstruction and rejection of this composite "individual" with the aim of revealing its underlying ground: for the wheel of life is kept

turning by the lust, anger, and delusion whirl within its very core.

Problematic Status of the Subject in Aesthetic Identification

The aesthetic sentiment (*rasa*) of anger (*raudra*), terror (*bhayanaka*), etc., evoked and sustained in the theatre by drawing upon our familiarity with and subservience to this mundane psychology, is paradoxically in the form of a relish wherein the same emotions are experienced with, as it were, greater intensity and yet without the concomitant urge to do something about them. This is why Abhinava rejects the opinion of Bhatta Lollata that it is the mundane emotions intensified by the objective aesthetic configuration that acquire the status of *rasa*: though attributed to the Samkhya viewpoint, this conceptual failure is actually shared by all the preceding schools of Indian epistemology. For the more powerful the passion the more overpowering our response in the world, whether it be psychopathic rage, uncontrollable flight, or suicidal depression. On the contrary, it is the willing suspension of purposivity (*artha-kriya-karitva*) that facilitates the evocation, development, and consolidation of the emotional disposition within the heart of the receptive spectator. But what is the mode of subjectivity, what happens to the awareness of "self," in the phenomenology of *rasa*? The perception of the lovers on stage is initially a "third person" experience of others that would have left us indifferent had we not already set aside our worldly purposivity as we took our seats at the theatre. We

are able to make sense of their (what would have been) "second person" interactions (in the real world) only by recalling and thereby reactivating our accumulated subconscious traces (*samskara*) of the same predisposition to love. As our hearts begin to resonate (*bridaya-samvada*) with its fluctuations depicted by the *dramatis personae*, the focus is on understanding the interactions on stage by supplying the relevant emotional motivations from our own store of latent memories. This "identification" (*tanmayi-bhavana*) is so complete that we seem to be experiencing the same emotion without any distinction of self and other.

Universalisation of (Aesthetic) Emotion Even Without Identification

Abhinava states categorically that in the enjoyment of *rasa*, for example the depiction of the startled deer fleeing before the king's chariot during the opening hunt-scene in the play *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, what we experience is fear alone, supreme and unconditioned by personal subjectivity (*pramatr-tva*), space, time and other usual concomitants of the dynamics of worldly emotion. The peculiar mode of attention (*avadhana*) required by the aesthetic configuration to evoke, sustain, and nourish the *rasa* also ensures that the emergence of "first person" subjectivity is arrested at its incipient stage – there is no cognition of the form "I'm afraid." It's because the emotion has been unable

to dissipate itself into myriad self-centered thoughts that it feels so impersonally intense and alive. At the same time, awareness of ego-self is not entirely suppressed as in an introverted state of spiritual absorption; it's merely suspended into a transparent ghost of its regular self. So much so that as a kid I sort of enjoyed horror movies but had to keep peeking from behind the back of the chair in front of me, and occasionally stop my ears, during the more climactic scenes. Since this same psychological state is shared by the entire audience, the aesthetic emotion (as opposed to its personal worldly counterpart) is said to have undergone "universalisation" (*sadharani-karana*). *Rasa* is best embodied by pathos (*karuna*) and love (*sringara*) which always depend entirely on identification with another person for their very existence, whereas the other sentiments may also be engendered without such a support (*ashraya*) through stimuli (*vibhava*) acting directly upon us. What's the difference in the enjoyment of humour with co-workers cracking jokes around the water-cooler at the office and at watching a stand-up comedy on television? However, even in the case of these other emotions (the status of humour remains dubious), the mutual neutralisation of space-time as conditioning the characters represented on stage and the representing elements of the spectator's here-and-now,¹²² further reinforces this universalisation, in a second sense, of the aesthetic emotion.

¹²² The "theatricality" (*natya-dharmi*) of the performance, that depends on a wide variety of artifices that are absent in real-life interactions and thus contribute to our recognition of a "make-believe" world, is also conducive to "universalisation" (*sadharanikarana*).

The World as Theatre: the Aesthetics of the Descent

Though wholly "extroverted," the aesthetic consciousness, intent on enjoying the sensuous objects of perception, is nevertheless turned back upon itself, mirrored by the impersonal nature of the universalised emotion that they sustain. In its theatrical enactment, the world no longer stands in opposition to the subjective self but is enveloped by the latter as the ultimate stage for the assumption of multiple roles, in a manner that corresponds to the Tantric dictum of "the self being the (supreme) actor" (*nartaka atma* – *Shiva Sutras*). By dissolving the opposition between the subjectivity of the connoisseur and the emotions deployed by the stage-characters, the separateness of the individual onlookers is also temporarily suspended. The goal of Abhinava's doctrine of "recognition" (*pratyabhijña*) is precisely to universalise the consciousness of the adept beyond the bounds of the limited (*parimita*) subject (*pramatr*) so as to embrace all objectivity (*vishva-rupavibheditvam*). Not only overpowering real-life emotions such as anger, fear, lust, and laughter but also other modes of sensuous physical experience, both pleasurable and painful, are exploited (in the *Vijnana-Bhairava-tantra*) as springboards to spiritual insight and aesthetic rapture (*chamatkara*). Though retaining the ascending mode of realisation within its larger perspective – as Abhinava's elevation of "tranquility" (*shanta*) to the very essence of *rasa*-ness itself eloquently testifies even within the classical

framework of Indian theatre – the Trika metaphysics is more intent on restoring to consciousness its pristine powers (*shakti*) of will (*iccha*) and action (*kriya*) in addition to those of knowledge (*jñāna*) already accorded by the other schools of philosophy. Abhinava has been able to provide an adequate account of the *rasa*-aesthetic using the traditional categories of brahmanical discourse precisely because he was experientially grounded in a "descending" mode of spiritual realisation that celebrated transcendence-within-immanence.

Shanta versus *Shama*

The distinction between *shanta* and its corresponding permanent "emotional" disposition of "cessation" (*shama*), a distinction that Abhinava defends at length, sheds a curious but all the more revealing light on the challenge posed by the aesthetic experience to canonical Indian understandings of spiritual liberation. Whatever their conceptual difficulties, everyone seems to have agreed that, just as emotional dispositions impose worldly finitude on the bound consciousness, the enjoyment of (the corresponding) *rasa* somehow restores (even) to the (unwitting) subject, by relaxing these very limitations, something of its pristine freedom and innate bliss. However, an enlightened sage like the Buddha tarrying in the real world even after the cessation of all emotional attachment – surely his experience of cessation (*shama*) must be more fundamentally spiritual than the ephemeral appreciation of "tranquility" (*shanta*) induced in others

through their identification with his depiction on the stage? The problematic nature of this distinction is betrayed by the fact that Abhinava appeals to the distinction, not between pathos and worldly sorrow (*shoka*), but to the equally (if not even more) problematic distinction between the worldly emotion underlying laughter (*hasa*) and the aesthetic relish of humour (*hasya*) in order to make his case. The inherent logic of *rasa*-thinking might have us believe that the *shanta* enjoyed vicariously and hence “extrovertedly” by ordinary folk is somehow superior to the “first-person” cessation of emotions in the introverted spiritual adept! Strange as this may sound to Indians used to affirming that Truth is One though the sages call it by many names, the Trika recognises not only various stages but also multiple modes of spiritual realisation: after all, many devotees (*bhakta*) of a personal God are not particularly keen to dissolve their individuality in the ocean of the Infinite.

Thus, those who pursue the classical Samkhya discipline till the very end are said to end up as wholly isolated selves (*vijnana-kevala*) with no capacity to act upon the world (like the early Buddhist *arhat*). Unlike its “worldly” (*laukika*) counterpart, *shanta*, as the quintessence of *rasa*, rather points to a mode of being in and enjoying the world that remains grounded in transcendence.¹²³

My own experience, for which the living proof is Abhinavagupta himself, is that continual immersion in artistic delight ends up with the aesthetic posture becoming generalised to the world at large. What’s required is a conceptual framework (*bauddha-jnana*) that facilitates the spiritual insight becoming entrenched and such an attitude taking full possession of self. The Pratyabhijna may well have facilitated Abhinava’s endeavour to conceptualise the peculiarities of *rasa*-consciousness, but the latter has in turn impregnated his “self-recognition” within the sensuousness of life.

¹²³ Abhinava tends to equate *shama* not only with “dispassion” (*nirveda* – an overwhelming spiritual “depression” due to disenchantment with the world akin to the “loss of feeling” that a “schizophrenic” might undergo) but also with “compassionate heroism” (*daya-vira*) exemplified above all by the *bodhisattva*, his own personal ideal of the “essence of enlightenment” in whom the Buddha-to-be is no longer easily distinguishable from the Buddha-who-was-and-is.

Trika Shaivism: An Introduction

Moti Lal Pandit

ABHINAVAGUPTA APPEARED AT THAT point of historical time when Shaivism had taken deep root as a distinctive religio-philosophical system in the soil of Kashmir. During Abhinavagupta's time (10-11th CE), Shaivism had become so embedded in the psyche of the Kashmiri populace that it had branched itself into various philosophical schools of thought, such as Spanda, Pratyabhijna, Krama, and Kaula. Although a sufficient degree of integration among the above schools of Shaivism had been realised, yet there existed a number of lacunae of thought and practice among them. It was left to the genius of Abhinavagupta to fill these up, which task he successfully accomplished through his magnum opus the *Tantraloka* (TL), or "The Light on the Tantras." This mission of synthesis derived its inspiration from the basic philosophical principles of Somananda and Utpala as well as from the study of the esoteric practices of the Krama and Kaula tantric systems. Insofar as the integration of various philosophical principles is concerned, Abhinavagupta accomplished this goal by writing, later on, commentaries on such a fundamental philosophical text as the *Isbhvarapratyabhijna* (IPV), or "The Stanzas on the Recognition of God," of Utpala. Kashmir Shaivism, moreover, is not only a close ally of Tantrism, but is permeated by the presence of esoteric practices. Prior to Abhinavagupta, scholarship on these esoteric tantric practices was scattered and in a state of diffusion. There was no text comparable, for instance, to Patanjali's *Yogasutras* (cf. *Tantraloka* 1.14), where one could locate them. To fill up this glaring gap, Abhinavagupta undertook the task of systematically interpreting the meaning and significance of these

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practices in relation to the Yoga of Kashmir Shaivism. In the *Tantraloka*, he treats systematically all those esoteric practices that would otherwise have been consigned to historical oblivion (TL 1.19).

Abhinavagupta was not only a prolific writer, but also a man of letters, of unfathomable wisdom and deep philosophical insights, an aesthete, and, above all, a yogi par excellence. The spirit of learning and experience permeates whatever he wrote or commented upon. He began his writing career when he had gained mastery over the various schools of Indian thought, including those of Buddhism. He had studied about the dualistic school of Shaivism, that is, the school which traces its lineage to Amardaka, from Vamanatha, the son of Ekanatha (TL 1.37-60). From Bhattenduraja Abhinava learnt the subtle aspects of the mono-dualistic philosophy of Shaivism, while Lakshmanagupta, the disciple of Utpaladeva, and the author of the *Ishvarapratyabhijna*, imparted the necessary instruction to Abhinavagupta on the subject of the monistic philosophy of Shaivism. From Shambhunatha, the great master in tantric lore, he learnt the esoteric practices of Tantrism. The school of Tantrism that Shambhunatha represented owes its origin to Trayambakaditya, and it was Trayambakaditya's daughter who initiated the preceptorial line of this school of Tantrism. Of his teachers, Shambhunatha, who initiated Abhinava into the esoteric lore of Tantrism, comes in for greatest praise (TL 1.21).

Abhinavagupta appropriately called his synthesis of all the schools of Kashmir Shaivism the Trika, or "Triadic," Shaivism, with Shiva, Shakti and Nara making up the triad. Traditionally, it is believed that the sources of Trika Shaivism are the sixty-four Bhairava Agamas. These Agamas, considered canonical, have been listed in the *Shrikanthi Sambhita*, and have been quoted by Jayaratha in his commentary, *Viveka*, on the *Tantraloka* (TLV 1.39-44). Most of the Bhairava Agamas, on account of historical upheavals, are no more extant. What we possess at this time are the two Agamas, namely, the *Svacchanda* and the *Rudrayamala*. Apart from the Bhairava Agamas, there are other Agamic texts that are also thought of as sources of Trika Shaivism: these are the eighteen Rudra Agamas and ten Shaiva Agamas. Abhinava relies upon three main Agamic texts in writing the *Tantraloka*: namely, the *Vamaka Tantra*, the *Siddha Tantra*, and the *Malini Tantra*. The last two texts have been extensively quoted in the *Tantraloka*, thereby indicating their importance and significance.

Most of the esoteric practices of Tantrism discussed in the *Tantraloka*, particularly the practice of meditation through the six ways of space and time, seem to have been extracted mainly from the sixty-four Bhairava Agamas. This system of meditation is called *shadadbhan*. The other meditational practice, called *kalinaya* ("the Method of Kali"), too seems to have been extracted from the Bhairava Agamas. This complex meditational practice is part and parcel of the *shaktopaya*, or the "Way

of Energy," can be understood only by those who have made much progress in the practice of the method. The esoteric aspect of this meditational technique is embodied by the twelve mysterious powers of Kali, Kali being the representation of ultimate Reality. The Trika Shaivism school conceives of Kali in a manner different from the Shakta school of Tantrism, which identifies the Feminine Principle with ultimate Reality. The Trika thinkers see Kali as being the absolute power of Shiva who, as the transcendent principle, is thought to be the embodiment of Reality. It is through this power, that is, Kali's power, that Shiva as the philosophic Absolute performs the five cosmic activities of creational emanation, preservation, destruction, concealment, and disclosure, as the *Tantrasara* (TS 28-30) notes. The doctrines and practices of Kalinaya have their source in the *Kramasutra* of Siddhanatha (TLV 3.157-58), and Abhinavagupta has discussed them threadbare in his *Tantraloka*. Though the text of the *Kramasutra* is not available any more, quotations from it are to be found in Jayaratha's *Viveka*. As numerous such quotations from lost texts are to be found in the *Tantraloka*, it is a veritable storehouse of information. In the absence of the *Tantraloka* we would have been deprived even of such little knowledge of important esoteric practices and doctrines of the various schools of Kashmir Shaivism as we now possess. Abhinavagupta has, thus, rendered great service to humanity by preserving these now lost practices in his magnum opus, the *Tantraloka*.

The *Tantraloka*

The published text of the *Tantraloka*, which consists of twelve volumes, is encyclopaedic in the range and depth of its discussion of the essential features of Trika Shaivism. The first chapter constitutes the first volume, and the second and third chapters the second volume of the *Tantraloka*. The first chapter deals with the basic characteristics of Trika Shaivism while the second chapter concerns itself with the significance of what is termed the *anupaya*, or the "Null Method," thus designated because in it the Shaiva yogin is completely free from both internal and external exertions. On account of Shiva's grace, the yogi has spontaneous experience of liberation, in terms of which the fetters of bondage are not seen as fetters any more. This method is regarded as the highest on account of its being totally the result of divine grace. The third chapter of the *Tantraloka* concentrates its attention on another important method that closely resembles the Null Method, namely, the *shambhavaupaya*, or the "Method of Shiva." Although little exertion in terms of meditation is involved in it, this method too is the result of divine grace (*anugraha, prasada*). This chapter also discusses the concept of *matrika*, or of "Mothers," alongside of the Method of Shiva. The *matrikas* as Mothers are the embodiments of Sanskrit letters, which symbolically represent the power of divine generation. As letters, the *matrikas* constitute mantras, and mantras are "forces" that unlock the mystery of existence.

While the first two volumes of the *Tantraloka* deal with the greater methods of salvation, the Null Method and the Method of Shiva, volumes three and four study the two lesser paths to salvation, namely, the *shaktopaya* or "the Way of Energy," and the *anavopaya* or "the Individual Way." The fourth chapter, which constitutes the third volume, not only explains the liberative Way of Energy, but also discusses the tantric concept of the twelve Kalis, or the twelve energetic modes of the Goddess, besides also the philosophic notion of "reflection" (*pratibimbavada*). The theory of reflection tells us how the absolute Shiva as Pure Consciousness is present in that which is manifest. The presence of Shiva is reflected in the manifest realm in the same manner as one's reflection is reflected in a mirror. The fifth chapter, which explains and discusses the liberative method of the Individual Way, begins with a discussion of the unique features of Shaivite techniques of meditation (*dhyana*). These differ radically from the ones enunciated in Patanjali's *Yogasutras* as Shaivite meditation is characterised by a pictorial visualisation of one's own inner potencies or forces. The meditator, while visualising pictorially these internal forces, correlates them to Shiva's cosmic activities of creational manifestation, preservation, withdrawal, concealment, and revelation. The meditator, through this process of visualisation, arrives at a point of heightened experience whereby complete identity between the individual consciousness and the Cosmic Consciousness is experienced. Also, in this method the meditator is asked to

focus his concentration upon the *shaktichakra*, or "the Wheel of Energy," which is also known as the *kalinaya*, or "the Way of Kali." The concentration upon the Wheel of Energy is so focussed as to result in the emergence of a state in which the various so-called internal forces are integrated in the womb of Cosmic Energy. This method of meditation is also known as "the Yoga of Intellect" (*buddhiyoga*). The *anavopaya*, or "the Individual Way," is meant for the beginner and is therefore considered to be inferior to the other methods mentioned above. Here, the meditator is asked to engage in such preliminary practices as are easy to practice. In order to stabilise his concentration, the meditator is advised to practice a specific type of *pranayama* or "breath control" that has been devised by the Trika Shaivism, which is a technique of breath control quite different from the one prescribed by the *Yogasutras*. The Trika system speaks of this technique as the *uttarayoga* or "the Yoga of Emergence." The technique is devised so as to enable the meditator to concentrate on the five functions of breath (*prana*) – the *prana*, *apana*, *samana*, *udana*, and *vyana*. The meditator who gains proficiency in this technique is expected to have six types of blissful experiences: the *nijananda*, *nirananda*, *pranananda*, *brahmananda*, *mahananda*, and *chidananda*, while the highest possible blissful experience from the practice of this meditational technique is termed *jagadananda*.

Volumes four through seven of the *Tantraloka*, consisting of chapters six to twelve, deal thoroughly with a most important cosmological doctrine, that of

the "Six Ways" (*shadadvān*) of space and time. The meditational techniques used in relation to the six ways are jointly thought of as belonging to the external aspects of yoga (*bahya-yoga*). The meditator, while meditating upon the six ways of space and time, concentrates on such meditative objects as are external to consciousness. The sixth and seventh chapters also delineate, alongside the meditative techniques used in relation to time, the esoteric aspects of the mantra, besides also informing us about how to correlate mantras to the movement of breath in relation to time. This type of meditation is called *chakrodaya*, or "the Emergence of the Wheel."

The Trika cosmology is explained in the eighth chapter of the *Tantraloka*. The cosmological structure of Trika Shaivism is based upon the twenty-five Samkhya categories of existence (*tattva*). It, however, adds eleven more categories, thereby taking the total up to thirty-six. The highest category is Paramashiva and the lowest one is that of the phenomenal world. Trika believes in the existence of numerous realms besides our empirical world, and these realms are thought to be inhabited by beings invisible to the naked eye. The eighth chapter discusses, in the context of the Trika cosmology, such tantric deities as are thought to be ruling over these various realms. The ninth chapter concerns itself with such theological issues as, for example, the problem of creation, the appearance of the three types of impurities (*malas*), and the nature of impure beings and of impure realms. The Trika mainly follows the Samkhya concept of

causation, which believes in the presence of effect in the cause (*satkaryavada*). This chapter also throws light upon the nature of the beings that inhabit the various realms, discussing thereby their respective practices and powers. The notion of *kala* in relation to space is studied as well, and technical details are furnished as to how *kala* can be made use of when meditating upon space.

The theological concept of grace (*shaktipata*) is discussed in chapters thirteen and fourteen of the *Tantraloka*. The Trika Shaivism of Kashmir has been called the religion of grace, as it is by and through divine grace that the seeker of salvation is enabled to reach his soteric goal of liberation in terms of realising his unity with the supreme Consciousness, namely, Paramashiva. Grace is said to be of three kinds, namely, intense, medium, and slow. Each kind of grace gives rise to a result that befits it. Chapters fifteen through twenty-seven discuss in the main such tantric rituals as have philosophical significance and meditative function, as also such rituals as are used in the various modes of tantric initiation (*diksha*). The twenty-eighth chapter studies the tantric rites that a *tantrika* adept makes use of in his daily worship while the twenty-ninth takes into consideration the important esoteric practices of Kaulism, which basically follows the left-handed tantric path (*vamachara*).

The last volume of *Tantraloka*, the twelfth, consisting of eight chapters, from thirty through thirty-seven, discusses various kinds of mantras and mandalas, though the most esoteric

practices are never explicitly discussed, and are instead, clothed in language of great ambiguity. The Trika system of thought is thoroughly analysed, with the conclusion that such a system of religious thought supersedes all others.

The *Tantraloka* is abstruse, and cannot be understood without the help of a good commentary. Fortunately, we have the *Viveka*, a detailed commentary on the *Tantraloka* by Jayaratha (12th century), who also wrote another commentary on the tantric text *Vamakeshvarimata*, a text belonging to the Kaula tantric school. The *Viveka* is a commentary that is of immense help in understanding the arcana of both the theory and the practice the *Tantraloka* studies besides also being a storehouse of quotations from several tantric texts that are no more available.

The Nature of Bondage

Fundamental to all schools of Indian thought is the belief that man's empirical existence is characterised by unfreedom, on account of which he experiences every kind of limitation and suffering, which state of conditioned existence is termed "bondage." The cause for this human bondage is said to be ignorance (*avidya*) and action (*karman*) (TL 1.25). Primordial ignorance about the nature of Reality terminates in actions that bind an individual to the peg of transmigration. Trika Shaivism differs radically from other schools of thought, particularly from the school of Advaita, with regard to ignorance. The term that the Trika school makes use of for ignorance is

a-jnana, which, when translated, means knowledge that is finite or limited.

Ignorance, thus, does not mean, as it does for Advaita Vedanta school, total absence of knowledge (*na-jnana*). For the Trika school, ignorance denotes a form of knowledge that is characterised by finitude. It is the limited knowledge of limited beings. As a result of this finite or insufficient knowledge, an individual erroneously identifies himself with that which is also limited or finite.

Consequently he equates himself with his physical body or with the products of materiality like the intellect or empirical ego. The limited knowledge that we as empirical beings have owes its existence to the erroneous perspective we entertain. It is thus not wrong to say that it is the sense of finitude of self-consciousness that constitutes empirical knowledge and which is thought to be the substratum or underlying principle of what the Trika calls ignorance.

Ignorance, or insufficient knowledge is thus seen as the main cause of human bondage. As a bonded being, an individual always identifies his self-consciousness with finitude.

Ignorance, according to the Trika, is of two kinds: innate (*paurusha*) and intellectual (*bauddha*) (TLV 1.36). Innate ignorance is characterised by an orientation in terms of which an individual experiences himself as limited and finite. This sense of limitation debars him from experiencing himself as infinite and unlimited. Finding himself limited, and thereby unfree, the individual subjects himself to the flow of space-time temporality (TL 1.37-38). It is this subjection to the flow of temporality that really constitutes

human unfreedom or bondage. For the Trika thinkers, it is this sense of limited individuality, caused by innate ignorance, that obstructs the awareness of infinitude. This sense limitation results in the law of restriction (*niyati*), which is the basic feature of temporal existence, for, as empirical beings, it is the law of restriction that governs us.

Intellectual ignorance – the second type of ignorance – expresses itself in terms of conceptual limitations. Solely depending on his intellect, an embodied existent thinks of himself as well as of his capacities in terms of space- and time-bound concepts. The limited conceptual knowledge that an individual has of himself leads him to think that his essential nature is as limited and finite as that of any object in Nature. As a self-reflecting being, an individual identifies his consciousness with his empirical ego. This limited self-awareness is a limitation of his finite conceptual knowledge. This kind of ignorance, in short, is characterised by mental confusion regarding one's own true nature.

This dyadic classification of ignorance does not mean that they are independent of each other (TL 1.40). Intellectual ignorance, for example, cannot find its proper expression unless supported by innate ignorance. This mutual support determines their dependence upon each other: it is their mutuality that is really responsible for the individual's subjection to such worldly experiences as are fundamentally painful. The totality of such experiences is termed *samsaric*. It is legitimate and proper for an individual to seek a mode of existence that is completely free from

samsaric pain. The Trika system recognises that the soteric goal of freedom from pain is possible only upon the elimination of the above two types of ignorance. There is the possibility that the preceptor may, through his miraculous power, cause the destruction of innate ignorance in the disciple; yet, the *Tantraloka* says that mental confusion may prevail yet on account of the continuance of intellectual ignorance (TL 1.45). Thus, ignorance will persist till such time as the seeker continues to entertain an erroneous intellectual understanding of Reality. The possibility of overcoming ignorance *per se* is available to the seeker, according to the Trika, provided he gets himself initiated in the esoteric path of Trika Shaivism. The destruction of ignorance, however, is dependent upon the extent to which the seeker successfully advances on his spiritual path. It is the inner spiritual development that enables the seeker to gain such spiritual powers whereby ignorance may disappear of itself.

As the function of ignorance is to conceal, so the function of knowledge (*jñāna*), as the opposite of ignorance, is to reveal that which is hidden or concealed. It is on account of this revelatory function of knowledge that it is equated with the luminosity of light. It is consciousness alone that has the power of revealing the object of knowledge, and accordingly, consciousness is said to be characterised by luminosity (*prakāśha*). Knowledge too, like ignorance, is classified into two types, namely, knowledge that is innate (*pauruṣha*) and knowledge that is intellectual (*bauddha*). Knowledge that

ends in the elimination of all forms of ignorance is said to be intuitive (*pratibha*). Mere intellectual knowledge has not the capacity to give rise to transcendent knowledge that is ultimate and final. This is so because intellectual knowledge is dependent upon the subject-object duality, and knowledge that is contingent has no possibility of eliminating ignorance in toto (TL 1.47). As far as innate knowledge is concerned, it is of an intuitive nature, on account of which character, it arises by itself (TL 1.41). Free from conceptual duality, innate knowledge thereby has the power of removing everything that obscures Reality. The emergence of this knowledge is actualised the moment the limiting individuality of the individual melts away. Upon the disappearance of individuality, and upon the appearance of intuitive knowledge, the seeker has the experience of Reality as pure and infinite I-Consciousness (*samvid*). This transcendent experience of Reality as being pure I-Consciousness results in what in theological terms is called liberation while alive (*jivanamukti*) and liberation after death (*videhamukti*) (TL 1.17).

Since Trika Shaivism adheres to the monistic philosophic viewpoint, it is but natural for it to say that an individual being is ontologically non-different from ultimate Reality, which is interpreted as being of the nature of pure Consciousness. Upon analysing the nature of ignorance as well as that of knowledge, it is but natural for the Trika thinkers to speak of the former as being the cause of bondage and of the latter as the reason for liberation. The erroneous apprehension of the Self as limited is

equated with ignorance, and as the nature of ignorance is to conceal, it gives rise to a form of knowledge of Reality that is erroneous, and which Trika Shaivism sees as the cause of bondage. Ignorance, thus, does not denote the absence of knowledge. Rather it signifies incomplete or insufficient knowledge about Reality. Were ignorance to mean complete absence of knowledge, then there would be no possibility for knowledge to emerge. Since such a situation has never been experienced, it means that each individual being has some knowledge of what Reality is.

The question that confronts us at this point is, why is it that some individuals develop a keen interest in the ways and means that are supposed to culminate in the realisation of perfect knowledge concerning ultimate Reality, whereas in others we discern the absence of such an interest? Trika's stock-in-trade answer to this question is to resort to the theological principle of grace rather than to rational explanation. They who seek the soteric knowledge of liberation are led on this path by the grace (*anugraha*) of Shiva (TL 13.105). The seeker's search for liberative knowledge is thus the result of divine grace, which is free and gratuitous. An individual of himself has no ability to intensify his desire for divine knowledge. It is grace alone that saves an individual from the perdition of *samsaric* bondage (TL 13.116). It can be pointed out that this divine determinism in terms of grace robs man of his free will and autonomy, even though it may be a limited one. Just as liberation is seen as the result of divine grace, so bondage too is viewed as the

result of divine concealment. Both these processes of revelation (that is, grace) and concealment (that is, ignorance) are treated as the divine play of the Lord. The Lord, while concealing his divine nature, manifests himself as a bound individual. The individual being breaks down the barriers of his boundedness the moment he recognises (*pratyabhijna*) his essential nature to be non-different from that of Shiva. This amounts to saying that the individual being is essentially and ontologically divine.

The nature and content of ignorance have been explained and interpreted in different ways by different schools of Indian thought, there being two points of view in this regard: one school of thinkers sees ignorance as causeless and beginningless whereas the other believes that ignorance has a cause as well as a beginning. The latter are theologically theistic in orientation, and so locate the cause of ignorance in the divine play of the Lord. In ascribing the origin of ignorance to this divine play of the Lord, these thinkers thereby can, equally, say that removal of ignorance too is the play of the Lord. It is a kind of hide-and-seek game that God seems to be playing with the inhabitants of the world. The former school, while not ascribing any cause to ignorance, calls it inexpressible. Although here ignorance is believed to be without beginning, it can be negated through the revelation of knowledge. Nyaya-Vaisesika, one of the oldest philosophical schools, is of the view that ignorance is characterised by the sixteen wrong elements of logical reasoning. In contrast to the Nyaya-Vaisesika position, we have the Samkhya-Yoga

school that adheres to the notion that ignorance comes to be on account of the mutual confusion (*aviveka*) between the individual consciousness (*purusha*) and lifeless matter (*prakriti*) (*Samkhya-karika* 20). The Advaita Vedanta of Shankara thinks that it is the transcendental illusion (*maya*) that really causes ignorance to be. However, this transcendental illusion is not a real entity. It is as illusory as illusion itself. Were *maya* to be real, then it could never be negated, which would mean that ignorance is eternal. If ignorance is eternal, then liberation is not possible. Since ignorance is negated upon the emergence of knowledge, it means that *maya*, too, is unreal. The orthodox Buddhists have equated ignorance with wrong views, which here mean adherence to extreme philosophical or religious viewpoints. In contrast to these extreme philosophical or religious views, the Buddha propounded and espoused the Middle Way. The Middle Way doctrine is contained in the Four Noble Truths. The Mahayana Buddhists, however, broadened their interpretation with regard to ignorance. The Madhyamika school of Nagarjuna would say that ignorance neither exists nor does not exist. If we negate or affirm one view, we thereby affirm or negate the other view. The purpose of the Middle Way is to have no view at all. This negative approach did not satisfy the Yogacara school which sees consciousness as momentary. In its momentary flow, consciousness manifests itself as ego in different individuals. This appearance of consciousness as ego is determined by

the past impressions that remain stored in what is called the storehouse-consciousness (*alaya-vijnana*). Insofar as these subconscious impressions remain unexhausted, consciousness as a momentary flow will transmigrate from one existence to another. These subconscious impressions are said to be the basic constituents of ignorance.

Trika Shaivism's understanding of ignorance is derived from its absolutistic theism. Though Reality is affirmed as non-dual, it is not, however, equated with philosophic impersonalism. The Absolute is not only Pure Consciousness, but also a Reflecting Consciousness, which means that the nature of Consciousness is not only luminous, but also dynamic. This philosophic conception of Reality is, at the popular level of thought, projected in terms of the dyadic couple, Shiva and Shakti. In theological terms this philosophic Absolute as Consciousness and Reflection is termed God or Lord. For a Trika Shaivite, the cause of ignorance is nothing but the divine play of the Lord. The manifest universe is nothing but the self-manifestation of the Lord (TL 33.64-65). This entire process of self-manifestation of the Lord as the manifest universe constitutes the drama of divine play. Moreover, it is one of his cosmic activities, and the other cosmic activities of the Lord are preservation, withdrawal, concealment, and revelation (TL 3.64). The process of manifestation simultaneously also involves concealment. While manifesting himself as the universe, the Lord thereby also conceals himself by appearing as an atomised and bound being. This process

of concealment of the Lord is equated with epistemic ignorance. As a bound being, the individual experiences himself as a distinct entity, and it is as a distinct entity that the individual may be considered as the creation of God.

The Nature of Liberation

Liberation and bondage are two opposed as well as contrasting entities. It is upon the negation of bondage that liberation is experienced. That which has the possibility of being transcended cannot at all be thought of as being real, because the real, being indivisible, can never be negated. This, then, means that liberation and bondage, from the ultimate standpoint, are not at all opposites. Were both to be treated as real, then we can never experience liberation. Since neither is actually real, it means that the so-called atomised individual exists always in the state of liberation. The problem lies in not recognising the fact that bondage is not real. Were not the case such, then liberation would be an impossible goal to realise. Our experience, however, informs us that we do experience occasionally, even at the empirical level, freedom. It would mean that bondage as limitation is not absolute, and, therefore, real. Bondage or ignorance will be seen to be real to the extent one remains subject to an empirical mode of understanding. Insofar as linguistic tools of analysis are made use of, we shall always attempt to contrast and compare it with liberation. Once empirical thought processes are transcended, ignorance by itself ceases to exist, and

thus, upon its negation, it no more exists as an entity opposed or in contrast to freedom.

Trika Shaivism holds that the existence of bondage will continue to the extent that our understanding of Reality is based upon misconceptions. The problem, therefore, is epistemological. The moment this epistemological confusion concerning the nature of Reality is resolved, liberation from bondage is realised at that very instant (TL 1.156). Gaining access to accurate knowledge about Reality is dependent upon the extent to which we have succeeded in the practice of Shaiva-yoga. It is asserted that the practice of Shaiva-yoga terminates in the attainment of that epistemological state that is known as the state of *pratyabbijna* or "recognition." It is a state of knowledge in which the essential nature (*svarupa*) of the Self (*atman*) is recognised as being non-different from the Absolute (*paramashiva*). Through this epistemic recognition is also recognised the fact that the external world is nothing but the self-manifestation or emanation (*abhasa*, *visarga*) of the Absolute (*Paramarthasara* 48). Moreover, this epistemic recognition results in the realisation that one's consciousness, which is essentially of the same nature as the Absolute, is not only limitless and infinite, but also omnipotent. An adept who has attained this state of recognition is termed as the one who is liberated-while-alive (*jivanamukta*) (IPV 2.3.17). A *jivanamukta*, while living in the world, is not, however, free from the impact of past deeds (*sanchita-karman*, *prarabdha-karman*). He will have

to reap the consequences of his deeds from previous existences till they are exhausted. To remain under the impact of *karman* would mean that he is not yet completely free from the limitations of bondage. Once the *karman*-impact is exhausted, a *jivanamukta* realises perfect identity with the Absolute, which means that he is now entitled to enjoy all the divine bounties. The state of perfect identity with the Absolute is consequent upon the abandonment of embodied existence, that is, after death. This absolute form of liberation is called the *videhamukti*, or liberation-upon-death. In contrast to the *videhamukta*, however, the possibility of experiencing divine omnipotence and omniscience is not available to the *jivanamukta*, on account of his being an embodied existent.

There is, however, a higher state of liberation that a *jivanamukta* has the possibility of gaining as an embodied existent, and this state is called *samavesha*, or "submergence." This is a liberative state that arises unexpectedly, and in it, the aspirant experiences perfect identity with the Absolute. It is a state of experience in which the aspirant's consciousness is, as it were, seized by the Absolute. While being conscious of his individuality, the aspirant simultaneously feels as if his individual consciousness is being transmuted into the Absolute (TL 1.173-174). This experience of the submergence of individual consciousness into the Absolute results in the recognition that the so-called individual consciousness is not different from divine consciousness. The experience of submergence also terminates in the realisation of

supernatural powers (*siddhis*). Two courses are open to a *jivanamukta* of this kind at the end of his earthly journey: he either chooses total absorption in the Absolute, or he may incarnate himself as a supernatural being for the purpose of extending help to those who seek liberation. This latter course of action seems to be based upon the Bodhisattva model. It is a model that teaches the abandonment of desire for personal salvation for the sake of others.

Apart from *jivanamukti* and *videhamukti*, there is another type of liberation called the *kramamukti* or "the graduated liberation." It is another form of liberation that is completely dependent upon the grace of the Lord. The grace, however, is such that it does not culminate in complete liberation from bondage. While practicing Shaiva-yoga, the aspirant does not develop such spiritual capacity as will enable him to loosen, in one go, the grip of impurities. Upon death, the aspirant on such a path has the possibility of entering into a divine abode that corresponds to the spiritual stage he had attained prior to his death. Upon entering the divine abode, he, with the aid of the presiding deity of the abode, may be able to eliminate all the impurities that bar him from gaining access to liberation. The aspirant, thus, in a graduated manner, moves to different higher divine abodes, and ultimately reaches a state whereby he merges in the Absolute (TL 13.244-45). This model, too, has an equivalent in Pure Land Buddhism, which believes that salvation comes through faith rather than self-effort. Realising the limitations of a human being, the Pure

Land Buddhists arrived at the conclusion that the grace of Amitabha Buddha alone has the power of freeing man from his bonded condition. They who have faith in the saving grace of Amitabha enter, upon their death, the Western Paradise. As Amitabha is the presiding Buddha of this heavenly realm, so he enables his believers to arrive at the ultimate state of salvation, i.e., *nirvana*. This is exactly what the Trika seems to be propounding in the context of its theory of *kramamukti*.

The Nature of Reality

Most of the Vedic schools of thought adhere to a philosophical viewpoint that may be termed realistic pluralism. As realists, they believe in the reality of more than one entity. The oldest realistic school is that of Nyaya-Vaisesika. This school of thought believes in the existence of several elements like atom, soul, mind, time, space, God, and so on. The other realistic school is that of Mimamsa, or the school of "exegesis." A firm believer in strict realism, this school agrees with Nyaya on many points. The other realistic school, the Samkhya-Yoga, believes in the eternal existence of matter (*prakriti*) and soul (*purusha*). Matter in itself is insentient. This insentient matter begins to evolve itself into the manifest categories of existence the moment there is disturbance among its three innate constituents, which are termed peaceful (*sattva*), passionate (*rajas*), and inert (*tamas*). Due to the disturbance in the equilibrium of the constituents, one of the constituents

dominates the other two. It is this disturbance that really provides the initial movement or thrust to primordial materiality to evolve itself into the manifest categories of existence. While undergoing the process of evolution, the soul, which is non-objective and Pure Consciousness, somehow comes in contact with insentient materiality. As a consequence of this contact, the soul thereby gets imprisoned in what is called embodied existence. While in the prison-house of matter, the soul's purity is not affected at all. It remains as pure as it was prior to its encagement. The relationship between the soul and matter is of the same nature as that between an object and its reflection in a mirror. The involvement of soul with matter therefore is not real but apparent. The theory of the three constituents has also been interpreted in terms of the qualities (*gunas*) of an entity. An entity is by nature either good, energetic, or harmful. Thus, if viewed from a psychological point of view, man's character is either good, active, or evil. In its application to ethics, the theory tells us that actions are either good, passionate, or evil. This theory therefore has influenced every aspect of Indian philosophical thinking: no school of Indian thought has escaped from the far-reaching influence of the Samkhya philosophy. The Vaishnavism and Shaivism of the South also follow the realistic pluralism conceptualised by the Samkhya system.

Buddhism as a heterodox school of thought does not at all encourage any kind of search for a metaphysical reality. The early Buddhists were not only

realists, but were analytical realists. As realists they believed in the existence of elements. As empiricists, they rejected the existence of entities that could not be verified empirically. For them the phenomenal entities exist, but only momentarily. Human existence itself is simply a psychophysical complex. No permanent entity like the self exists within man. Man is simply a bundle of ever-changing aggregates. The chain of causation can explain how the world has come into existence. Thus, the principle of first cause is eliminated once and for all. Insofar as human subjectivity is concerned, it consists of factors that are as momentary as are the objective ones. Since this naïve realism could not satisfy the inner yearnings of man, it was accordingly abandoned in favour of critical philosophy upon the emergence of the Madhyamika school of thought. This school of thought was so radical that it neither affirmed nor denied the existence or non-existence of anything. Since nothing can affirmatively or negatively be said about Reality, it is better to remain silent. This silence concerning Reality was identified with the Buddha's Middle Way doctrine, which maintained the avoidance of extreme standpoints, whether ethical or philosophical. Further, the Madhyamikas interpreted the avoidance of extremes as denoting the Buddha's theory of dependent origination (*pratityasamutpada*). The thrust of this doctrine is that phenomenal entities do not arise by themselves or through others, but through the principle of interdependence. This doctrine of interdependence is graphically depicted

in what is called the chain of causation. As phenomena arise interdependently, it means that they are destitute of an intrinsic nature (*svabhava*). That which is devoid of innate nature is, according to the Madhyamika thinkers, identical with Emptiness (*shunyata*). Insofar as the Absolute is concerned, we can say nothing about it, as it transcends every mode of thought. It is Emptiness alone that indicates as to what the Absolute is. As both the Absolute and the world are identical with Emptiness, they are, thereby, non-different from each other, which means that *nirvana* and *samsara* are one and the same. This radical negativism, however, could not last for long, and accordingly, a new school of thought came into existence, namely, the Yogacara school. The Yogacara school, being idealistic in orientation, endeavoured to harmonise the naïve realism of early Buddhism with the critical philosophy of Madhyamika. Instead of laying its eggs in the basket of Emptiness, the Yogacara postulated the existence of the Mind-Only. Insofar as the world outside is concerned, it exists to the extent that it is perceived by the mind. The objective world is to be treated as a mere representation. Mind or consciousness, however, is as momentary as any other aggregate. Even this idealism of the Yogacara could not satisfy the religious yearning of an average Buddhist. Ultimately a kind of theism as well as philosophical monism was allowed to emerge. The theistic orientation gave hope to the ordinary believer that he has the possibility of gaining access to *nirvana*, whereas monism ushered in a philosophical

outlook that saw each sentient being as potentially a Buddha.

The doctrine of momentariness is so universalised as to lead to the conclusion that no permanence can be established in any empirical category. The momentary existence of empirical categories also means that there is no permanent substratum that may be seen as the basis of change. Instead each empirical entity is generated in a moment and, while generating as its replica another entity, passes away in a moment. This process of momentary generation and destruction goes on endlessly. Nothing endures beyond a third moment. It is this perspective that the Yogacarins apply to consciousness. For them consciousness is as momentary as any other empirical entity. The momentary existence of consciousness expresses itself in terms of mental states and physical entities. For the Hinayana Buddhists, the momentary flow is of two kinds: (a) mind and mental states, and (b) matter and material entities. Accordingly, the conclusion is that no metaphysical entity is to be found beyond the momentary flow of mind and matter. It is this view of flux or change that has prevented most of the Buddhists from embarking upon an ontological journey.

The sectarian Hindu religious schools uphold their respective views concerning the nature of Reality. The Vaishnavite school of Vallabha claims to be monistic in orientation, yet, on investigation, the claim does not pass the logical test. Vallabha's philosophical views are closer to the views of another Vaishnavite thinker, namely, Ramanuja.

As far as the Veershaiva school is concerned, it is difficult to determine what they mean by *samarasya*. The concept of *samarasya* is so ambiguous that we are unable to assess the relation of the liberated soul to Shiva. The Advaita Vedanta of Shankara, although monistic in its orientation, is not sufficiently theistic (see *Mandukya-karika* 1.16-17).

The Trika Shaivism of Kashmir, even as it upholds monistic theism, thinks that the Absolute is the ontological substratum of all that that is manifest. As Absolute, it is beyond the reach of empirical or rational categories of thought. The Absolute as transcendent can neither be explained nor expressed in terms of intellectual concepts. Whatever rational knowledge we may gather about the Absolute, it is always in terms of approximations. The Absolute is unnamable, and so we cannot speak of it as being Shiva or Shakti (TL 2.24). Whatever linguistic or conceptual formulation we may advance concerning the Absolute, it is never absolutely real or authentic (IPV 1.1.2). This is so because the intellectual formulations about the Absolute are always determined by the restrictions that space-time imposes upon the intellect's capacity to know. As the Absolute is transcendent to the space-time continuum, so the intellect, which operates within the framework of space-time, has no power to conceive what the Absolute is in itself. It is this non-conceivable Absolute that is said to be the source as well as substratum of all that is manifest. Although undefinable in itself, the Absolute however has been

defined as that which is eternal and infinite I-consciousness. As the source of everything, the Absolute thereby is everything. Being identical with every manifest category, the Absolute thereby also shines in everything as everything. Although identical with every phenomenal category, it transcends them all.

Further it is asserted that the essential nature of the Absolute is its Godhead, that is, the Absolute is God by its very nature. By identifying the Absolute with Godhead, the Trika thereby favours theism. For this reason the Trika philosophy has been categorised as theistic monism.

Insofar as ontological explanation of the Absolute is concerned, Trika Shaivism has adopted the following philosophical approach. Every entity, whether phenomenal or numinous, owes its existence to Shiva, who is identical with the Absolute as God (TL 1.52). Shiva as absolute God is pure Light (*prakasha*), that is, spiritual light of consciousness. This Light of Shiva is self-evident everywhere and in everything due its very nature (TL 1.54). It is on account of this light of consciousness that we are able to know what is to be known. If consciousness was destitute of this light, then there would be utter darkness and the emergence of knowledge would be impossible. Since it is in and through consciousness that knowledge is actualised, it means that the nature of consciousness as light is self-evident. Therefore, consciousness as light cannot be known by employing empirical means of knowledge. The equivalence of consciousness with the luminous light is

established by the fact that every conscious being is conscious of himself. This self-consciousness arises on account of consciousness being identical with light, that is, with revelation. As the nature of light is luminosity, so the nature of the light of consciousness is to illumine everything by its light. Light reveals that which has existence or that which exists. In the context of phenomenal entities it means that they depend for their existence upon the light of consciousness (TL 1.59-60). To shine as well as to illumine everything that exists is the very nature of the light of consciousness (TL 2.16). Since everything shines in and through the light of consciousness, it is but the light of consciousness that shines in all manifest categories of existence (TL 2.30). This philosophical monism of Trika Shaivism is known as the *pratyakshadvaita*, or the monism that can be perceived through the senses (*Malinivijayavartika* 1.763). Light, as one of the inherent aspects of the Absolute, is infinite, sovereign, eternal, and thereby beyond the space-time continuum (TL 1.59-60).

The Absolute as consciousness is not only light (*prakasha*), but also reflection (*vimarsha*). The reflective aspect of the Absolute discloses its dynamic nature. It is through the power of reflection that the Absolute manifests itself in phenomena in different shapes and forms. It is in and through reflection that the Absolute appears as phenomena. The universe as well as whatever there is in the universe is the self-manifestation of the Absolute. They who have gained perfection in Shaiva-yoga perceive as

well as experience that everything in the universe is nothing but the self-extension of Shiva himself as the *Shivadrishhti* (5.105-9) notes. They see the presence of Shiva not only in the manifest categories, but also beyond them. Trika Shaivism does not attempt, as does the Advaita Vedanta, to apply the principle of indicative power of speech (*lakshana*) to such scriptural statements as, for example, *tat tvam asi* ("that thou art"). The Trika Shaivas uphold that Shiva as Absolute shines both in the world as well as beyond it. The Absolute thus is both transcendent and immanent. The Absolute, when conceived as God, is endowed with the absolute powers of will, action and knowledge.

Taking cue from the *Upanishads*, Trika Shaivism has attempted to explain the manifestation of Shiva as consciousness in psychological terms. The Absolute manifests itself not only as an objective universe, but also in and through the three states of consciousness: of waking, of dreaming, and of deep sleep (TL 1.80). It is in and through its luminosity that the Absolute both pervades and transcends the objective world of phenomena. It is in the revelatory aspect of the Absolute that the cause of the universe has been located. It is maintained that the light of consciousness continuously shines forth as well as maintains the playful drama of the universe (TL 1.92). The entire universe is nothing but the manifestation of the light of consciousness by virtue of its playfulness. To be playful is the basic nature of Shiva (TL 1.66). *Prakasha*, in

the process of its manifestation, does not suffer from any modification because the Absolute manifests itself in the same manner as the moon is reflected in a clean pool of water (TL 3.4).

The indivisibility of the Absolute shines forth eternally due to its being of the nature of light. The luminosity of the Absolute represents its static aspect. As the essence of light is reflection, so the Absolute shines forth as God through the five cosmic powers of manifestation, preservation, withdrawal, obscuration and revelation. It is through the reflective aspect that the Absolute expresses its five cosmic powers. At the conceptual level of thought, this aspect is known as *shakti*, which in terms of religious devotion is symbolised by the Goddess. The Goddess, as the principle of femininity, represents the creative aspect of the Absolute. Shiva, while representing the principle of maleness, is in Himself passive and inactive, and this is conceptually represented by the luminous aspect of the Absolute. It is *shakti* that imparts the necessary dynamism to the otherwise passive Shiva. These aspects of the Absolute – passivity and dynamism – are not to be seen as possessions. Such an interpretation would entail dualism in that the possessor would be completely distinct from his possessions. For the Trika, both passivity and dynamism are of the essential nature of Shiva and so have to be viewed as a single unity. As a unity, they do not cause any internal division within the Absolute. Luminosity is the infinite light of Absolute Consciousness, whereas dynamism represents the creative activity of Consciousness as light.

As both passivity and dynamism are identical with the Absolute, so, accordingly, the Absolute is referred to as Absolute Consciousness (*samvid*). Luminosity and dynamism as Shiva and Shakti are the two aspects of Paramashiva as Consciousness (*samvid*). Luminosity represents knowledge, whereas dynamism represents creativity (IPV 1.8.11).

The Absolute of the Trika is not an impersonal and abstract being. The Absolute, rather, is God, and as God he is, in the fullest sense of the word, sovereign. It is as sovereign that God engages, without depending on anything, in the five cosmic activities of manifestation, preservation, absorption, obscuration and revelation (TL 1.79). Since the manifest is the self-emission of the Absolute, so it means that the manifest categories, prior to their manifestation, exist as consciousness (*samvid*) in the Absolute (IPV 1.5.1; 5.10). The phenomenal categories, in their unmanifest condition, exist in terms of an integral "I" of the Absolute. The "I" of the Absolute is not to be equated with the empirical ego. It is, rather, the absolute consciousness of the Absolute. The absolute "I" has, thus, been spoken of as perfect (*paripurna*) in itself.

The universe and its categories, prior to their manifestation, exist as pure Ego (*aham*) within the Absolute. They manifest themselves as the "this" (*idam*). It is in terms of the "this" that the Absolute appears as the variegated universe of diverse entities. While manifesting itself as the universe of diverse entities, the Absolute thereby

appears as if its absolute powers of knowledge and action have been atomised. This process of the appearance of the Absolute is equated with a play, in which the actor, while identifying with the character, himself remains unchanged. The Absolute, while appearing as a limited or atomised phenomenal entity, remains in itself indivisible and unchanged. This divine drama is enacted to keep the creational manifestation going on for aeons. At the end of each aeon, there is withdrawal, which terminates in the absorption of the manifest into the pure subjectivity of the Absolute. At the time of dissolution, the non-liberated beings are pushed into the abyss of ignorance whereby the process of obscuration is actualised. While obscuring itself, the Absolute also obscures the divine potency of countless beings. When the concealing power of obscuration is removed, it is called the act of divine grace. It is through grace that the divine nature of one's self is realised. These five cosmic activities or powers that constitute the essential nature of the Absolute (TL 1.79).

The Nature of the Manifest

All the schools of Indian thought are of the view that cosmology and ontology are closely related to each other. Four main cosmological theories have been advanced by the various cosmologists. One of them thinks that the phenomena are composed of elements that are subtle and exist eternally. These subtle elements that compose the universe are the atoms (*anu*). It is God who brings

creational coherence into these elements, and thereby the creational manifestation is allowed to emerge. This theory of creation is spoken of as that of "origination" (*arambhavada*). The philosophical school of thought that adheres to the theory of origination is Nyaya-Vaisesika. This theory thinks of God as being merely the efficient cause of the universe. His function may be equated with that of a potter. As the potter fashions his various objects from the existing material, namely, clay, likewise God fashions the universe out of existing eternal atomic elements. God does not cause the universe *ex nihilo*. As an instrumental cause, God is not really the creator of the universe. Rather, his role is limited to that of a designer.

The second theory of creation is that of "transformation" (*parinamavada*). It is the Samkhya-Yoga school that originally developed this theory of causation. The thrust of this theory is that the diverse component elements that are constitutive of the universe are but modifications of the "primal materiality" (*mula-prakriti, pradhana-tattva*). When there is absolute equilibrium among the constituents (*gunas*) of primal materiality, then no modificatory evolution occurs in matter. When there is disturbance among the constituents, which are of the nature of peace (*sattva*), of energy (*rajas*), and of dullness (*tamas*), then the primal materiality, through the process of self-modification (*parinama*), passes through different phases of evolution. The primal materiality, in the process of its evolution, evolves into the various evolutes that compose the universe. The various components or

categories that are constitutive of the universe are said to be a mixture of the three constituent processes. Insofar as the primal materiality is concerned, not only is it eternal, but also contains within itself all that appears in the manifest universe. The component elements that constitute the universe do not owe their existence to a fresh creation. They are rather the mere manifestation of a primal materiality. The component elements, at the time of universal dissolution, are absorbed, through the reverse process of submergence, by the primal materiality. In this theory of causation God is completely absent. The manifest universe does not owe its existence to God. The inherent laws within the primal matter are responsible for causing the evolutionary process that results in the actualisation of the objective universe. Likewise, these very laws cause the dissolution of the universe.

Trika Shaivism agrees with the Samkhya in its depiction of the evolutionary process, but they disagree on the subject of causation. Trika Shaivism does not think that the primal matter, which is insentient, is the cause of its own self-manifestation. It believes that it is God who is responsible for causing the primal matter to manifest itself as the objective universe. Further, the primal matter is not an eternal entity existing by itself or outside of God. Rather, it always exists within God. It is out of him/herself that God emits the universe. This is why the Trika thinkers see the world as the self-extension of God.

The third theory of creation is that of

"appearance" (*vivartavada*). This theory is mainly subscribed to by the Advaita Vedanta school of Shankara. According to this theory, there is actually no creation. As creation does not exist, it only appears to exist. Since the world does not actually exist, it means that there has never been creation. What we think to be existing is, in fact, mere appearance. This appearance of the universe is linked to the dream-objects that appear in a dream. The objects of the dream appear to be real as long as the dream lasts. The objects of the dream, however, disappear once the dream comes to an end. Similarly the world appears to be real to the extent that we operate under the influence of ignorance (*avidya*). Upon the negation of ignorance, the essential character of the universe becomes apparent. The Trika Shaivites, although non-dualists, reject this view of the reality of the world. Accepting the world to be real, they severely criticise all such theories that reduce the reality of the world to that of dream-objects (IPV 2.3.4).

The Pashupatas, Shaiva-siddhantins and Gorakhnathis have a theistically oriented theory of creation. They believe that it is Shiva who brings about modifications in the primal matter, and thereby allows the creational manifestation to take place. In this conception, God is seen merely as an efficient cause and not as the actual creator. He simply fashions the existing material into various designs and forms, and nothing more than that. If this is the case, then the primal matter has to be seen as the material cause of the universe, and as such, as an independent

entity. There are, however, some from among the above schools who have identified primal materiality with Shakti, which is identified with the power of Shiva. This Samkhya conception of matter via Tantrism is equated with the feminine principle, namely, the Supreme Goddess. The Goddess as the consort of Shiva is seen to constitute the creative aspect of Shiva. It is through His innate power (*shakti*) that Shiva allows the manifestation of the universe to take place.

The Trika authors have developed their own specific theory of creation, which in contrast to the above theories of creation, is known as the "principle of sovereign will (of God)" (*svatantrya-siddhanta*). According to this theory, it is the sovereign will of God that really is the cause of the manifest universe. God emits the universe out of Himself the moment He wills its manifestation. This willing of the manifestation of the universe is ascribed to divine playfulness. To be playful is the essential nature of God. God, while giving rise to the categories of existence (*tattvas*) out of Himself, is completely independent in engaging himself in this creative activity. As God emits every creational category out of Himself, so it is assumed that each category, prior to its emission, must necessarily be existing in Him as potency. This idea of an entity existing prior to its manifestation is directly borrowed from the Samkhya theory of causation. The Samkhya theory of causation says that every effect, prior to its actualisation, exists potentially in the cause. It amounts to saying that the entire universe exists as the very self of

God, that is, infinite and eternal "I." This divine Ego as Consciousness is not static or passive; it is of the nature of vibration (*spanda*). Thus Supreme Consciousness is equated with vibratory movement, and it is on account of this vibratory nature of consciousness that God engages in the creative activity of manifestation.

The total number of manifestational categories is said to be thirty-six. The process of manifestation occurs from Paramashiva down to earth. The first five manifestational categories, from *Paramashiva* to *Shuddhavidya* or *Sadvidya*, are termed pure (*shuddhadva*) on account of their not suffering from any kind of division or duality. *Paramashiva* as Absolute appears as Shiva and Shakti, the former representing the Absolute and the latter, Godhead. Shiva and Shakti, as it were, constitute the luminous and reflective aspects of the Absolute. The third manifestational category of pure creation is termed *Sadashiva*, or "the eternal Shiva." This manifestational category of the Absolute is equated with God when absorbed in the playful activity of creational variety. The diversity that is found in creation is because of the activity of the Absolute as *Sadashiva*. The fourth manifestational category is that of *Ishvara*, or "the Lord." The Absolute manifests itself as *Ishvara* when engaged in the divine functions of Godhead. Finally, we have the category of *Shuddhavidya*, or "pure knowledge." The category of *Shuddhavidya* is that manifestational category of the Absolute in terms of which the divine revelation as grace is accomplished. In other words, the appearance of the Absolute as "pure

knowledge" denotes that the knowledge of this category is absolutely free from the conceptual fallacies that bedevil empirical modes of understanding. The first five manifestations of the Absolute are the fundamental appearances, accomplished through the total independence of the Absolute's will. As these five manifestations are pure, so each manifestational category shines as being identical with the infinite I-consciousness, which is the Absolute. From *Paramashiva* to *Shuddhavidya* there is no awareness of duality whatsoever.

The manifestational categories from *Shuddhavidya* downward belong to the realm of *maya*, or what is called "impure creation (*ashuddhadva*). They are so called because their function is to obscure or conceal the non-dual nature of the I-consciousness. It is from the *maya-tattva* onwards that the process of manifestation is made gross.

The obscuration of I-consciousness is determined by the degree to which a particular category (*tattva*) is gross. *Paramashiva*, while manifesting himself in the form of gross categories, appears, on the one hand, as a limited sentient being, and, on the other, manifests himself, through his sovereign will, as an insentient element. The insentient elements of impure creation serve as the basis of what is called insentient creation (TL 9.149). The sentient element, being covered by *maya* or impurity, is reduced to finitude, and so accordingly is called *anu* (atomic) or *pashu* (unfree). The bound being (*pashu*), on account of its limitedness and finitude, identifies I-consciousness with the finite ego or self. By imposing the sense of limitation

upon itself, the unfree being differentiates himself from others in terms of his empirical identity. This sense of differentiation results in what may be called self-forgetfulness, that is, he forgets the fact that he is non-different from the Absolute, and thereby also from the other. As the impure creation is pervaded by the impurity of *maya*, so it is *Ishvara* as the manifestational category of the Absolute that actualises the process of impure creation (TL 9.148; 1.61, 79-80, 92; 3.196, 206; 4.10).

Trika Shaivism rejects the Samkhya theory of causality in terms of which the cause transforms itself into the effect, or should we say that the effect, prior to its actualisation, is identical with the cause. The Trika rejects this theory in the context of cosmology. If God as cause of the universe is seen transforming Himself into phenomenal entities, then God suffers from internal division, which would destroy the notion of His indivisibility. In place of the Samkhya theory of causal transformation, the Trika postulates the theory of reflection (*pratibimbavada*). According to this theory, the universe is neither the transformation of Shiva nor of his Shakti. As the nature of God is pure luminosity, so it is this luminosity which projects God as the universe in the manner an image is reflected in a mirror. While being reflected as the universe, the luminosity of God remains intact (TL 3.44). By virtue of its luminous light God thereby illumines all phenomena. Prior to their manifestation or emission (*visarga*), all the phenomenal entities exist in the Absolute, which is

none other than *Paramashiva*. Prior to their manifestation, the entire universe and entities therein shine forth as consciousness in the Absolute – and it is their transcendental state (*paramarthasatta*) (IPV 1.5.1; 5.7). The phenomenal entities, while shining as reflection, both rise and fall within the pure I-consciousness. It is on account of this rise and fall that the phenomenal entities suffer from temporal finitude. As they are appearances of the Absolute, so they come within the sphere of *abhasa*: the manifest categories are of the nature of psychic light (*abhasa*), which shines as the lustre of luminosity (IPV 3.1.2).

The Principle of Vibration

It was Vasugupta who for the first time enunciated the theory of vibration (*spanda*) in his primary text, namely, the *Shivasutra*. The purpose of this theory is to point out that the essential nature of the Absolute is not only luminosity (*prakasha*), but also vibration (*spanda*). It is due to its dynamic nature that the Absolute engages in creative activity by giving rise to phenomena. Bhatta Kallata consolidated this conception of the Absolute as being luminous as well as dynamic in two important texts, namely, the *Spanda-karika* and *Spanda-sarvasva*. Bhatta Ramakantha and Bhatta Bhaskara, in their commentarial works, remark upon the significance of this idea of the Absolute as dynamic. Leading philosophers like Somananda and Utpala accepted this conception of the Absolute as being the basic tenet of Trika Shaivism. It was, however, Abhinavagupta who integrated this

philosophic conception with both the theory and the practice of Trika Shaivism.

The idea of the Absolute as being dynamic seems to have arisen in opposition to Advaita Vedanta, a school that upholds the idea that the Absolute is sheer luminosity, which means there is no dynamism to be found in it. Being peaceful (*shanta*) and passive, the Absolute of Advaita Vedanta is totally devoid of dynamism. To counter this conception of the Absolute as passive witness, the Trika thinkers added to it another dimension, that of dynamism. It is the innate dynamism of the Absolute that, as it were, impels it to manifest itself as the universe. The Buddhist concept of matter as being dynamic seems to have influenced the Trika thinkers here.

The vibratory nature of consciousness, in the context of finite beings, carries within itself many types of psychophysical movements and activities. The diverse movements and activities of finite beings reflect, in a miniscule form, the dynamic nature of the Absolute. The non-differentiated state of vibration is of blissful nature, and is realised in that meditative state known as *turiya*, or the Fourth state. It is upon transcending the empirical states of consciousness, those of waking, deep sleep, and dreaming, that one comes to the Fourth. The Fourth state is a state of spiritual revelation. There is, however, a still higher state of spiritual illumination that is known as the *turiyatita*, that is, "beyond the Fourth," and so, accordingly, is identified with the absolute transcendental state of pure Consciousness.

The term *spanda* is derived from the root *spadi* meaning, "to move a little" (*kinchit chalana*). Abhinavagupta equates this term in his commentary on the *Paratrimshika* with the spontaneous spiritual activity of Pure Consciousness. And this spiritual activity of pure Consciousness is realisable through Shaiva-yoga (PTV 207-208).

The Absolute as Paramashiva is Shiva precisely because of his being God. The Absolute is equated with Shakti on account of its being the embodiment of Godhead. One of the essential aspects of Shakti is *spanda*, on account of which the Absolute engages in a twofold activity with regard to creation. This twofold activity of the Absolute expresses itself in the manifestation and dissolution of the universe. The concept of *spanda* has been explained in various ways in the Agamic literature. It has been described as *sphuratta* ("twinkling"), *ghurni* ("dizziness"), *urmi* ("wave"), *matsyodari* ("the throb of a fish when out of water"), and so on.

The Number of Manifestational Categories and Realms

Categories of existence, right from Paramashiva down to the earth, have been classified into thirty-six elements (*tattvas*). All the thirty-six categories have been reduced to five *kalas*, and each *kala* contains within itself a certain number of categories as well as realms (*bhuvanas*) and their specific kind of existents. The total number of realms that have been accepted by Trika Shaivism is said to be one hundred and eighteen, and these realms exist beyond the visible realm of which we are a part.

Each realm is presided over by a Rudra, which is a form of Shiva, or by a Bhuvaneshvara, that is, by the Lord of the Realm. The nature of the existents that inhabit these realms is determined by the realm that they inhabit. The existents of these realms have been classified into seven types.

Trika Shaivism maintains that the manifestation and dissolution of these realms as well as the process of bondage and liberation of existents therein is both controlled and directed by God through his manifold absolute powers. In order to govern these realms efficiently, God seems to have delegated some of the governing powers to the presiding deities of these realms. Each presiding deity is believed to be the embodiment of some divine power.

The phenomenal manifestation occurs through certain stages of evolution, and each evolutionary stage gives rise to a certain number of categories. A category or element (*tattva*) represents the essence of several similar categories. It is this essence that binds them together into a whole (TS 69; IPV 3.1.2). The essence of an element is permanent, and so remains intact at the time of universal dissolution. The manifest categories, at the time of dissolution, are reduced to their respective essences. The categories emerge from these essences at the time of universal manifestation.

Even though there are various categories, yet there is, in fact, only one category, and that is, *Paramashiva*. This is so because Paramashiva not only contains within himself the essence of all the categories, but also is the essence of everything (TL 9.2). Paramashiva,

manifesting himself as the universe, appears as Shiva, Shakti, and Nara. It is on account of this triadic conceptual framework that Kashmir Shaivism is called the *trika*. Correspondingly the entire field of existence, too, has been classified into a tripartite state of unity (*abbedā*), unity-in-diversity (*bhedabbedā*), and diversity (*bhedā*). This classification of existence is equated with a triadic elemental division of *Shiva-tattva*, *Vidyā-tattva*, and *Maya-tattva*. Since the path of objective meditation (*tattvadhyān*) accepts the number of categories of existence to be thirty-six, so it is this number that Trika Shaivism accepts as constituting the manifestational realm from *Paramashiva* down to earth. Further it is maintained that as the thirty-six categories have their rise and fall in *Paramashiva*, so the total number of categories is thirty-seven when *Paramashiva* is included in the list.

As the categories of existence pertain to the manifestational realm, so they are referred to as objective categories meant for intellectual reflection (*prameya-tattva*). The first five categories, from *Shiva* to *Shuddhavidya*, are free from the distortions of *maya*, and so are said to be pure. The beings that inhabit these realms are also pure. Due to their purity, they are aware of their divine powers. As they do not identify the self with any insentient element, they thereby are aware of their identity with the absolute I-consciousness. It is, thus, the undifferentiated awareness that is constitutive of the first five manifestational categories.

The philosophic Absolute, when viewed from a theological perspective, is identified with *Paramashiva*, which is

the thirty-seventh category when counted from the gross element of earth upwards. The Absolute as *Paramashiva* is described as having two innate aspects, namely, the static and dynamic. The static aspect of the Absolute corresponds to the passivity of consciousness as being a witness or light. It is in and through the dynamic aspect that the Absolute expresses the five cosmic powers of manifestation, preservation, withdrawal, obscuration and revelation. While manifesting itself in the form of manifestational categories, the Absolute, however, itself remains unchanged and undivided. It is the static aspect of the Absolute that really explains the indivisibility as the total unity of *Paramashiva*. It is in its static aspect that *Paramashiva* appears as *Shiva*, while the appearance of *Shiva* as *Shakti* occurs through its dynamic aspect (*Shivadrishti* 7.12-14).

Already it has been explained that *spanda* denotes the innate vibration within *Shiva* as *Shakti*. The initial vibration is directed towards the manifestation of phenomenal categories. The actualisation of this vibration results in the emergence of the categories of *Sadashiva* (or *Sadakhya*) and *Ishvara*. At this point of manifestation the vibration expresses itself as *Sadashiva* in terms of an inward movement, whereas outward movement is actualised in the form of *Ishvara* (IPV 3.1.5). All the manifestational categories are contained within *Shiva* and shine as infinite I-consciousness. When innate vibration is directed outward, it shines forth as the "this" (*idam*) of I-consciousness, which indicates the sense of differentiation or duality. Upon the emergence of the

sense of differentiation, consciousness thereby shines forth as "I am this" (*aham idam*) or "this is myself" (*idam aham*), which means that there is the duality of subject and object (IPV 3.1.3). This awareness of "I" as "myself" results in contrasting "myself" with the other. The sense of difference at this manifestational level is not so acute as to result in a kind of unbridgeable duality, which is the bane of empirical existence. There is both the sense of unity as well as diversity, and so this manifestational stage is termed as representing the state of unity-in-diversity (*paraparadasha*). Since this manifestational stage hangs between complete unity and diversity, so it has appropriately been called an intermediate stage of manifestation (IPV 3.1.5). When there is the experience of unity-in-diversity (*bhedabhedha*), it is taken to be the fifth manifestational category called *Shuddhavidya* or *Sadvidya*. In other words, it is at the level of fifth manifestational category that the experience of unity-in-diversity is actualised (IPV 3.1.3).

The evolutionary manifestational process upto the fifth category is termed as being pure on account of the absence of the dichotomising power of *maya*. Thus the entire manifestational process upto the fifth category is termed pure. Once the manifestational process goes ahead, then the dichotomising power of *maya* begins to operate. This process of dichotomisation is itself a creation of the Lord, or what is called Ishvara, which is the last category of pure creation (PTV 119). It is the creative will of the Lord that manifests itself in the form of *maya* (TL 9.149-150). The function of the

category of *maya* is to conceal the essential nature of the Lord (IPV 3.1.7), and on account of this obscuration the Lord appears in the form of finite beings (*anu*). In addition to its obscuring function, *maya* is also the basic substance for the evolution of phenomenal categories (TS 77). At this point it seems that *maya* is made to serve the purpose that primal materiality (*prakriti*) is made to serve in Samkhya. It is the Samkhya concept of *prakriti* that is transformed into the creative power of God in the Trika Shaivism of Kashmir. It is Samkhya that has provided the necessary conceptual premises to Trika Shaivism on the basis of which an attempt is made to rationally explain cosmogensis.

The experiencing subject, although essentially unlimited, experiences himself, within the temporal realm, as being finite and limited. The subject's subjectivity experiences itself as being limited on account of the concealing veils of *maya*. The function that is assigned to *maya* is to conceal the essential nature of the subject's subjectivity, and the consequence of this concealment is the experience of finitude. As a result of *maya*'s obscuring powers the subject is deprived of the enjoyment of his own essential nature, which is that of bliss. This deprivation of self-enjoyment terminates in the agitative restlessness (*lolika*) of the subject (TL 9.62). The phenomenal subject, however, is not completely deprived of the experience of enjoyment. He does have the capacity, albeit a limited one, of experiencing delights objectively through his senses. This very capacity for enjoyment indicates that the

subject's subjectivity is essentially of the nature of bliss. The rays of bliss penetrate one's subjectivity the moment *maya's* hold loosens its grip.

The limiting or obscuring powers (*kanchukas*) of *maya* have been classified into five types. The first limiting power, called *kaala* ("time"), limits the subject's field of action and consequently the subject remains unaware of his divine power of omnipotence. The second obscuring power of *maya* is that of *ashuddha-vidya* ("impure knowledge"). Time and space limit all forms of empirical knowledge or understanding. Whatever empirical knowledge we possess is a localised one. The limitations that *maya* imposes upon knowledge results in the deprivation of the subject's omniscience. The third obscuring power of *maya* is called *raga* ("attachment"). It is on account of attachment that the interests of the subject remain restricted. This restricted interest imposes such limitations upon the subject's field of action and knowledge that he finds it difficult, nay impossible, to cross over the barriers of his embodied existence. This limited interest also indicates that the individual seems to have no liking or preference for knowledge that is transcendent or spiritual. The fourth obscuring power that *maya* puts into operation is that of *niyati* ("the law of restriction") which expresses itself in and through the operations of what we call objective Nature, whose laws operate in such a manner as to result in the curtailment of the subject's autonomy. Subject to the laws of Nature, the individual subject experiences such powerlessness that he is unable to act independently. The same is

the case with knowledge. For the acquisition of knowledge he is completely dependent either on his senses or upon the objects that seem to exist independently of him. The individual existent, being subject to the laws of Nature, experiences himself as being dependent upon external factors in relation to knowledge and action (TL 9.210-11). Finally, we have *maya's* obscuring power of *kaala*. It is on account of the obscuring power of time that the individual subject experiences himself as being finite. This experience of temporality deprives the subject of the joy of immortality. All these functions of *maya* prevent the individual from knowing who he essentially is. It is upon the removal of the obscuring veils of *maya* that the individual recognises that he is essentially divine, that is, identical with Paramashiva. This state of absolute knowledge results in the experience of bliss that is free from the distortions that *maya* inserts in the process of manifestation (TN 9.204).

Paramashiva becomes, as it were, an atomised experience on account of the concealing veils of *maya*. This atomised condition of the Absolute is called the condition of *purusha*. In other words, a limited individual is nothing else but *purusha*. At this point Trika Shaivism turns upside down the Samkhya concept of *purusha*. For the Samkhya school, *purusha* is passive, and so is in no manner involved in the operations of Nature (*prakriti*). As *purusha* is pure intelligence, so it cannot, by any stretch of imagination, relate itself to that which is opposite to it, namely, matter. Although caught up in the web of embodied existence, yet its relationship

with materiality is tenuous and is of the nature that exists between an object and its reflection. For the Trika, however, the condition of embodied existence itself is given the nomenclature of *purusha*, which means that *purusha* and *prakriti*, as is the case in Samkhya, are not dialectically opposed to each other; rather they complement each other. While complementing each other, *purusha* and *prakriti* thereby also enjoy each other. It is the divisionary power of *maya* (*kaala*) that actualises the emergence of *purusha* and *prakriti* (TL 9.215). Upon its manifestation, *prakriti* carries within itself the three strands of pleasure, pain and ignorance, which are equated with the three constituent processes of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. To the extent these three constituents remain in a state of equilibrium, the manifestational process does not take place, which means that there is no appearance of pleasure, pain or ignorance. Once this equilibrium is disturbed, then there begins the evolutionary process of manifestation in terms of which the entire manifest order is given rise to. The manifest order, however, consists of entities that are either enjoyable or painful. Wherever the strand of goodness (*sattva*) is prevalent, there the limited individual has the experience of joy. This experience of limited joy is facilitated by Shiva's power (*jnanashakti*) of illuminating goodness. The limited individual experiences pain on account of the predominance of the strand of passion (*rajas*). It is Shiva's infinite power of action (*kriyashakti*) that really appears in the form of the pain-giving

strand of passion. The diversity that is constitutive of the manifest order is because of Shiva's power of obscuration (*mayashakti*). It is through the power of obscuration that everything, at the manifest level, is reduced to a state of dense darkness – and darkness is nothing else but the representation of ignorance (IPV 4.1.4). Darkness represents ignorance because it veils the revealing or illuminating power of knowledge. Knowledge and light go together, whereas ignorance associates itself with the absence of light, which is but darkness.

Paramashiva is spoken of as God or Ishvara when engaged in the five cosmic activities of manifestation, preservation, dissolution, obscuration and revelation. The objective process of manifestation begins the moment God descends to the abode of materiality. The very descent of God to this abode denotes that the equilibrium among the three constituent strands is shaken up. This disturbance results in the emergence of twenty-three instrumental and objective categories (TL 9.225). God causes disequilibrium among the three constituent strands when he initiates a kind of stir within the womb of materiality. This stirring itself is counted as one more manifestational category between materiality and its product, namely, intelligence (*buddhi*). It is intelligence that is the first objective manifestational category. With the emergence of intelligence comes into being the sense of I-ness (*ahamkara*). Once the sense of ego has been actualised, there then emerge sixteen categories, which are the mind, five

organs of perception, five organs of action, and five subjective elements of sound, touch, colour, taste, and smell.

The Classification of Impurity

Upon emitting out of itself the entire manifest order, the Absolute thereby atomises itself by appearing as a limited, temporal being. This sense of limitedness or of temporality comes to the fore on account of impurity, which is the product of *maya*. The basic function of impurity may be likened to that of mud which, when disturbed, muddies the transparency of water. Likewise impurity puts such a veil upon the inner eye of the individual that he is unable to see clearly as to what he actually is. This veiling of the vision is called ignorance. Once impurity, in the form of ignorance, becomes operative, then the individual experiences ontological separation from the Absolute. It is this sense of separation that deprives the individual from recognising himself as being essentially identical with Paramashiva, and thereby with everything that is constitutive of the world. Impurity, thus, may be seen as that process of obscuration of free will whereby the individual remains ignorant concerning his essential nature (TL 9.65-66).

As impure creation is the result of *maya*'s operation, so *maya* leaves its imprint, in the form of basic impurity, upon the entire manifest order. The basic impurity (*mala*) undergoes a process of development, and at each stage of its development it is given a specific name. In the initial stage of its development, it is known to be of

atomic (*anava*) nature. The atomic content of impurity denotes that it is of finite nature and, as such, expresses itself through finite beings. The individual who is under the influence of this impurity remains forgetful about his essential nature, which is that of infinite I-consciousness (IPV 3.2.6). The finite consciousness, in contrast to infinite consciousness (*samvid*), is as empty (*shunya*) as the vacuum within a pitcher. The very vacuity of finite consciousness tells us that its illuminating power, as it were, has been obscured to such an extent that it has lost complete capacity of revealing anything to itself (TL 6.9-10). The function of the *anava-mala*, thus, is to give rise to a kind of fractured awareness within the individual that terminates in the identification of the self, which in itself is complete and perfect, with pure vacuity. There are, however, some limited beings who, though under the influence of *anava-mala*, do not think of themselves to be as empty as the interior of a grave (IPV 3.2.4).

The fundamental philosophical thesis of Trika Shaivism is that nothing exists apart from God. This thesis is explained monistically in terms of which it is asserted that God is in everything and everything is in God. This identity between the Absolute and the phenomenal categories is recognised at that level of knowledge (*vidya*) where the operations of *maya* are neutralised. Insofar as an individual remains under the influence of *maya*, to that extent his mode of understanding will depend on the subject-object dichotomy. For such an individual the actualisation of

knowledge will be impossible unless he not only objectifies his own consciousness, but also allows the objects out there to confront him. This confrontation between the knowing subject and the knowable object is the real basis of all forms of empirical knowledge. The knowing subject, while in the process of acquiring empirical knowledge, experiences the ontological difference between himself and the object that is to be known, between the objects of knowledge, between God and himself, and thereby between God and the world. This sense of difference or of separation is the result of what technically is called "the impurity of *maya*" (*mayiya-mala*). The impurity of *maya* either functions together with the atomic impurity (*anava-mala*) or separately (IPV 2.2.9). It is upon the foundation of atomic impurity upon which the impurity of *maya* builds its structure, as the former is the base for every kind of impurity.

Thus far we have analysed how the atomic impurity and the impurity of *maya* operate and function. The former impurity gives rise to a sense of limitedness or finitude, whereas the latter is responsible for creating the sense of ontological division. The third evolute of impurity is called "the impurity of action" (*karma-mala*). This form of impurity is said to be the most powerful on account of its being the result of all the past deeds that one has performed in previous existences. Upon the maturity of deeds, the individual has to reap the consequent fruit of what he has done in the past. What we are at present is because of *karman*.

The Classification of Existents

As already pointed out above, there are various realms, and each realm is inhabited by such existents as are suited to it. There is thus a hierarchical correspondence between realms and the beings that inhabit them. It is the quality of the realm that really determines the quality of the beings that are to inhabit it. It is within this hierarchical framework that the beings that inhabit various realms have been classified into seven types. The lowest type of being is known as Sakala. The creatures of the Sakala type are at the lowest rung of the hierarchical structure on account of their being the most impure among all creatures. Creatures of this type exist under the influence of all the three impurities. Being most impure, the existential condition of such creatures too must be unbearable. They are born in existential conditions that one would never wish for (IPV 3.2.10). The second type of creature, called Pralayakala, is a little higher than the first one. Beings of this type, at the time of cosmic dissolution, revert to the state of dormancy. Beings of this kind do not operate under the divisionary power (*kaala-tattva*) of *maya*, and consequently do not get involved in such obscuring powers of *maya* as, for example, *kanchukas*. Existing apart from the evolutes of *maya*, they are, therefore, also spoken of as Akala, that is, disembodied existents. This state of existence is not the result of good deeds or purity. It comes to be on account of their reversion, at the time of cosmic dissolution, to the state of dormancy,

which results in their disembodiment. Being without a body, creatures of this type are accordingly spoken of as the beings of dissolution. It is due to their disembodied existence that these creatures gain freedom from the operations of *maya* during the period of dissolution (IPV 3.2.6, 7). At the end of cosmic dissolution, that is, upon the emergence of manifest order, the creatures of this type regain their embodied form of existence, and consequently are subject, like any other embodied existent, to the cycle of transmigration (TL 9.139).

The third kind of creature on the hierarchical ladder of ascent is known as Vijnanakala, that is, "the cognitive creature." Creatures of this type are free from the divisionary power of *maya*, and this freedom is theirs due to their capacity for knowing the Absolute. The knowledge of identity that they have of the Absolute is of partial nature, for the cognitive experience of identity pertains only to the luminous, and not to the dynamic, aspect of the Absolute. This partial knowledge of the Absolute enables them to rise above the state of vacuity, which is the lot of Sakala beings. As a result of this partial knowledge of the Absolute, the Vijnanakala beings arrive at the threshold of pure I-consciousness, which means that a little striving is yet needed for attaining the perfect cognitive experience of identity. This little striving would enable these creatures to attain a higher state of existence whereby perfect cognition of identity may be realised. Beings qualitatively higher than the Vijnanakala are known

as Mantras as well as Vidyeshvaras, that is, "masters of knowledge." Beings of this kind have the power and ability to achieve perfect cognition of identity with the Absolute as Pure Consciousness (*samvid*). Not only do they experience the Absolute as pure Consciousness, but also come to realise their divine powers. These beings, however, still experience the phenomenal order in terms of difference, that is, in terms of "this" rather than "I." This sense of difference with regard to phenomenality is the result of the impact that the *mayiya-mala* has upon them (IPV 3.2.9).

There are two types of beings that are pure and completely free from the three types of impurity: the Mantreshvaras and Mantramaheshvaras. Their spiritual maturity is of an order high enough to ensure that their cognitive experience of the Absolute is in terms of unity-in-diversity (*bhedabhedā*) (IPV 3.1.2). The experience of unity-in-diversity denotes that the spiritual journey has not yet attained perfection. In terms of subjective experience, it means that these beings have only partially experienced the Fourth state (*turiya*). Although no active impurity of any kind is to be found in these beings, yet the inactive seeds of the basic impurity (*anava-mala*) still linger in them. These beings still have to work out their salvation in terms of attaining a state of existence that is totally spiritual. It is the spiritual being alone who, upon merging in the Absolute, shines forth as an autonomous Subject. For such a spiritual being the experience of objective existence as "this-ness" merges in the "I-ness" of subjectivity.

The Classification of the Principle of Animation

The principle of animation for the various beings corresponds to their mode of existence or spiritual status. The basic principle of animation is called *prana*. It is on account of the vital breath that the biological functions of embodied existents becomes possible. Once animated by *prana*, the living creatures are thereby differentiated from entities that are insentient or lifeless. All types of existents, from Sakala to Akala, function in and through the power of *prana*. *Prana* as the power of animation operates differently at various levels of animation. The operation of *prana*, for example, is quite different at the level of waking from what it is when one is in deep sleep. Similarly it functions differently for different beings, depending upon the nature of their mode of existence. *Prana* acts upon Pralayakala beings in a manner quite different from the way it acts upon beings of the Vijñanakala type. *Prana*, the classification of which goes back to the Vedic texts, is of five kinds, namely, *prana*, *apana*, *samana*, *udana*, and *vyana*. *Prana* and *apana* are said to be the two aspects of life-force essential for the sustenance of the life of those beings that have an embodied mode of existence (*sakala*) (IPV 3.1.19). When *prana* and *apana* merge, through the yogic practice of *pranayama*, into each other, and thereby eliminate their respective particularity, then emerges a state of awareness that is characterised by cosmic unity. Life-force, thus, has one more function apart from keeping embodied existents alive – and this is to allow the

emergence of the awareness of unity. This merger of *prana* and *apana* into each other also denotes the dissolution of one into the other. On account of this merger, awareness shines forth in terms of I-consciousness. This state of dissolution, or of non-particularity, usually occurs in the state of deep sleep. The state of unity arising upon the merger of *prana* and *apana* into each other results in the emergence of the state of *samana*, or the “equalising state.” The state of *samana* is actualised in the state of *sushupti*, which corresponds to the dreamless state (IPV 3.2.19). As the state of *sushupti* represents total rest, so it is responsible for energising animation itself. The beings upon whom the *samana* principle of animation is operational are known as Pralayakalas. As the *samana* breath emerges upon the dissolution of *prana* and *apana*, so the Pralayakala beings, while existing as disembodied existents during the period of cosmic dissolution, actualise the state of dissolution, experienced only when one is in deep sleep. There, thus, is a close connection between *samana*, deep sleep, and the beings of Pralayakala. The fourth state of animation, known as *udana*, is a state in which thought-process comes to a point of complete cessation. As a consequence of this cessation, the sense of egoity disappears, which means that I-ness of the supreme Consciousness shines forth in its full glory. In this state of cessation, the mind halts its activity of reflection and of conceptualisation, and so it has been equated with the yogic state called Fourth state (*turiya*). The *udana* principle of animation operates usually

among the Vijnanakala beings. The spiritual glow of the *udana* state also gets intensified among the beings known as the Mantras, Mantreshvara, and Mantramaheshvara. The yogin who has attained to this state experiences the rising up of a burning sensation in the spinal cord (*sushumna*) towards the top of the head (IPV 3.2.20). This burning sensation is the intimation concerning the arousal of Kundalini which, as the energy (*shakti*) of Shiva, represents the Goddess. The complete arousal of the Kundalini is accomplished when the state of *vyana* is reached. The *vyana* state of animation results in the experience of complete unity or what may be called penetration (*samavesha*). This perfect undifferentiated state exists only in the Absolute, that is, Paramashiva. Accordingly it is known as that state that "transcends the Fourth" (*turiyatita*) (TL 6.186).

The Concept of Divine Grace

The final cosmic activity of God is said to be that of revelation, or the stage in which He reveals Himself as He is. This self-disclosure on the part of God is a consequence of His grace (*shaktipata*). On account of divine grace there arises the initial movement for liberation in the individual being. Upon the emergence of this stir for liberation, the individual directs his effort towards knowing how God's disclosure may be actualised. Trika Shaivism is of the view that it is God's grace that should be seen as the mainspring of an individual's search for liberation. There is too little possibility that man by himself can even

entertain such a thought, let alone seek liberation. Grace as the cause for liberation denotes that an individual is totally dependent upon God to the extent he remains unliberated (IPV 1.1.1).

God's grace descends upon individuals without any distinction or partiality. The effect of grace is felt to the extent that impurities become non-operational. As the impact of impurities upon each individual is different both in dimension and intensity, so the working of grace also differs from individual to individual. There are individuals who function densely surrounded by impurities, and there are individuals who have thinned, through religious practices, the impact of impurities. The thinning of impurities is also dependent upon the measure of maturity these individuals have attained, as it is in a graduated fashion that the ripening of the self or the culling out of impurities (*malapaka*) occurs. The working of grace will bear its fruit much faster in those who have attained maturity through thus culling out impurities, while the ones in whom the impurities are yet flourishing may not experience the workings of grace in the same measure as those on the threshold of abrogating their impact.

Trika Shaivism is of the view that grace should not be treated as being the result of one's religious deeds. Grace is purely a free gift from God (TL 13.256-57). The result of meritorious deeds is threefold. The good deeds may determine: (1) the future birth of an individual in some specific abode (*loka*) or species; (2) the span of life (*ayu*) that

the individual may live, and (3) the kind of pleasures he may experience. Thus, neither grace nor liberation is seen to be a consequence of one's meritorious deeds in this typology. Meritorious deeds, instead of abolishing the wheel of becoming, only enhance it. The distinctiveness that differentiates good deeds from evil ones lies in the fact that the former may provide better conditions for one's rebirth, whereas the latter may not. Action, whether good or bad, terminates in a definite fruit, and the quality of the fruit is dependent upon the quality of action. All said and done, one's present or future rebirth is determined solely by the quality of the actions one performs.

But why should God bestow grace gratuitously upon individuals without their asking for it? It is the very nature of God, maintain the Trika thinkers, to bestow grace upon people. It is the playful free will of God that is the real cause of grace. The descent of grace upon an individual occurs in accordance with His free will, which, according to the Trika, is His essential nature. While pouring down His grace upon people, God does not necessarily take into consideration whether they have sinned or not. Grace is meant for the sinner primarily, which also means that God does not make any distinction between the sinner and the righteous when it comes to the question of grace. This aspect of grace is well described by Utpala when he writes: "Sir, you should have taken into consideration the merits and demerits of a person when bestowing your grace upon him; but you never do so." In the second half of the

verse he remarks: "But, having played this game with me, why are you now delaying the dawning of realisation within me?" (see the *Shivastotravali*).

Trika Shaivism, while accepting the role of divine grace for hastening the process of liberation, does not at the same time discount self-effort as a means of reaching the soteric goal. Self-effort is seen as one of the important ingredients for the development of inner spirituality. The very attempt at self-effort, however, is seen as the result of divine grace. If self-effort is isolated from divine grace, then there is all the possibility of its transforming into an egoistic enterprise. It would mean that an individual does not need the help of God to pursue his spiritual path. Such an interpretation of self-effort is not acceptable to the Trika thinkers. The bonded individual, however strong of will he may be, is always in need of divine grace. This dependence on grace discloses the fact that man is a contingent being insofar as he leads an embodied mode of existence. Trika Shaivism, thus, maintains that they alone persevere in the path of self-effort who remain conscious of divine presence, or, in other words, upon whom God pours down his grace in abundance. The divine grace of God may be seen as the initial point of movement towards salvation. It is on account of grace that there emerges within the individual love for God. Love and God's grace, thus, go together in helping the individual onto the path of liberative self-realisation (TL 13.276).

Trika Shaivism accepts devotional love of God, and thereby divine grace, as a legitimate spiritual means of reaching

the specific soteric goal of liberation. It is the divine grace of God which, on the one hand, is seen as the fundamental cause for the emergence of love for God within the individual's heart and, on the other, it is really one's love for God that terminates in the descent of grace (*Shivastotravali* 8.1). Once grace begins its work in the recipient, it directs the recipient to an appropriate preceptor. The preceptor, too, showers his grace by expounding the theoretical knowledge contained in the Trika system. The thrust of this knowledge is to enable the disciple to grasp intellectually what the nature of ultimate Reality is, and the nature of the relationship, if any, between it and the world. In addition to theoretical knowledge, the preceptor also imparts knowledge concerning the practice of Shaiva-yoga. It is through the practice of Shaiva-yoga that the disciple is empowered to know who he essentially is. The preceptor also, through his spiritual powers, burns up impurities within the disciple. This is the spiritual trajectory that the disciples mostly have to travel. There are, however, some individuals who do not have to go through the above process. These exceptional individuals are so fortunate that God bestows upon them grace that is speedy and intense. As a consequence of this intense grace the seeker does not have to approach a preceptor. Whatever knowledge such a seeker needs for his salvation arises

spontaneously within him. This spontaneously arising divine knowledge is called *pratibha* (TL 13.140), that spiritual glow that always shines, that is the luster of consciousness. This spiritual glow of consciousness is present in all living creatures (TL 13.135).

The divine grace of God is said to be of two kinds: liberation-oriented grace and pleasure-oriented grace. The former creates within the individual such an earnest desire for liberation that he seeks nothing else but liberation, whereas the latter terminates in the enjoyable experiences of divine powers (*siddhis*) and not in liberation. Thus the former is spoken of as being transcendent (*para*) and the latter as being worldly (*apara*) (TL 13.254, 256). The grace that leads to transcendence is either intense (*tivara*), medium (*madhya*) or slow (*manda*). This is also the case with non-transcending grace. The grace that is intense gives immediate results, whereas grace that is of the medium kind takes time, and the grace that is slow may take a long period of time to enable the recipient to reach his goal. Trika Shaivism's understanding of grace, in the final analysis, tells us that whether one seeks liberation or worldly goals, one is dependent upon grace. This dependence upon grace points to the fact that man as a creature of temporality is contingent, and so, entirely dependent on God, thus reaffirming the interdependent nature of human relationships.

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Agamic Assumptions of Indian Literary Theories: An Exposition Based on Abhinavagupta

Rajnish Mishra

Unmesha (Introduction)

AGAMA (TANTRA) AND NIGAMA (*veda*) are the two major currents of India's intellectual tradition. The tradition believes that these two streams have always existed together. Ontologically and epistemologically, they deserve equal status and prestige.¹ However, there are distinctions between the two, not in their ultimate goals, but in the means they recommend, in their points of departure, and in their differing emphases on important aspects of life and reality. Setting aside the social, ritualistic and religious implications, we may broadly state here that *veda* and its associated streams advocate *nivritti* (abstinence from the modes of mind), whereas *agama* advocates *pravritti* (inclination towards the mental modes). The former teaches the use of the discriminating cognitive faculties for the discernment of what is real from what are the evolutes of *maya* (i.e. merely a construct or what takes forms otherwise), while the latter expounds that there is nothing to accept and nothing to renounce, as the apparent world is indistinguishable from its Creator, who has projected it on the canvas of His/Her own Self.² The picture *bides* the canvas in much the same way as form *veils* the substance. The canvas goes into deep oblivion and the picture it holds becomes the object of experience and intellectual enquiry. Another significant distinction between these two modes of thought and exposition that must be highlighted here is that the Veda(s) are

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¹ *Sarvaṃ śivamayam jagat*, "Shiva is all-pervasive," says the Shaivagama, and *sarvaṃ khalvamidaṃ Brahma*, "Brahman permeates all," says the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* (3.14.1).

² Abhinavagupta's *Anuttarastika* (included in the eighth volume of the *Sritantraloka* (ed./comm. Dr. Paramhans Mishra, 1992-99) and *Pratyabhijñahridaya* of Rajanaka Kshemaraja.

drishta (seen or visualised; self-evident), whereas the *agamas* are *upadishta* (stated or interpreted). The distinction between these two streams is crucial and needs to be understood carefully, as it provides space to the "modern" educated mind, which, trained in modern/(Western?) institutions and paradigms, is often tempted into importing dichotomous/conflicting theoretical categories or models from the West without realising how disastrous their effects may be on the thought-content under discussion.³ In the near past, we have been (and may well be, in the near future) obsessed with these "theories," often at the expense of the existing data. Since the theories are manufactured by the "first world," their claims of universal applicability are unquestioningly taken for granted whenever staked: the "data," in such a situation, must be appropriated for the survival and the benefit of the "theory." However, the

distinction between *veda* and *agama* does not involve any hierarchy or dichotomy. If *agama* comes under the category of *upadishta* ("stated"), we must note at the same time that it is articulated by none other than Shiva⁴ Himself, to His beloved wife Parvati, or by Parvati to Shiva. The setting of this dialogue is remarkable for the calm, serene and extremely intimate environments it is set in. We do not notice the "presence" of any third person here – in fact there is no space for the "other" at all. There is no space even for the two: this is a dialogue between wife and husband, and the *ardhanarishvara*⁵ (image of Shiva as half-male and half-female, *shiva* and *shakti*) principle establishes the perennial unity of the two in a single substratum. In this intimate dialogue, the "inter-space" demands a complete dissolution of a second or third being. In short, there is space for "absence," but not for "a marked presence" at all. The

³ Marco Pallis rightly observes, "Present day Indians and other Orientals, since so many of them, through being made to suffer the elaborately organized ignorance that passes under the name of a 'modern education' – often dearly purchased for them by still pious but unsuspecting or complacent parents – have had their powers of discernment so disastrously upset that they seem no longer capable of receiving ideas through the medium of their own language; and their readiness to swallow quite uncritically the most hazardous hypotheses, even those relating to their own traditional doctrine, provided they have been put forward by some European sociologist or philosophers, is the evidence of a state of mind that can only be described as defeatist; and among these people are to be found men of supposedly high standing and illustrious lineage, occupying responsible positions as rulers, leaders and instructors, but whose professed leadership is of the very essence of dependence and servility" (Translator's Foreword to the *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrine* 12). If for the Westerner a true knowledge of the traditional doctrines offers the only effective means of escaping the impending disaster that so many dread but feel powerless to prevent, through a process of inward reintegration and of reform in the literal sense of the word, so also for the Easterners it remains of consolidation, self-renewal, independence and recollection; and for the two jointly it spells the bridging of the existing rift" (ibid 15).

⁴ One of the epithets for Shiva is *panchavaktra* or *panchanana*, "of five faces or mouths."

⁵ This is the Indian realisation of the "male" and "female" principles in a single substratum. No dichotomy or opposition can ever exist in the philosophical thought and speculations in this tradition. Bringing about a greater synthesis among the apparently different or opposite views and objects characterises the Indian mode of thinking, where *Advaita* (non-dualism) remains a dominant mode in the intellectual tradition.

"duality" inherent in the etymology of the term "dialogue" in the present context is only morphemic and does not hold any ontological content. By altering or conditioning its *signified* (though this may be an act of a *violence* in a way), we may use it in the sense of *samvada*, or, more appropriately, *bridaya samvada* (lit. perfect expression and communication), i.e., one that does not involve any second or third person. To become a part of this "dialogue" (henceforth substituted for *samvada*), we need to not only rid ourselves of our identity or identities, which create/s "duality," but we must also "become of the same heart or sensibility" (*sabridaya*), by harmonising our "self," because "harmony" is a prerequisite in such an intimate dialogue. This perpetual dialogue here constitutes a "closed text," to use Umberto Eco's formulation (*The Role of the Reader* 49). An ontological readership for such a "text" (the dialogue) must qualify on two necessary interrelated counts:

1. *nairmalya*: purity of mind and heart, akin to a mirror's clean shining surface, which is essential for receiving the reflection of image; and
2. *tanmayibhavana*: the ability to become one with the object or goal of inquiry.

The goal is to know and to experience the content of the "text." There does not

exist any "author" or "authority," and hence, no question of authorial intention or meaning arises: there need be no apprehensions about falling easy prey to what Wimsatt and Beardsley call "intentional or affective fallacies" (see *The Verbal Icon*). This dialogue involves a code system in which a consistent and insightful mind can read one or more than one meaning. Meaning is not a product but a process of becoming that comes into being through the devices of signification.

This, then, is the setting and form of dialogue in which Bhairavi puts her queries to Bhairava, and to which he responds with deep love and reverence.⁶ The content of this dialogue is intense and deep and to some extent "obscure." Also, the mode in which this content has been uttered or articulated is of great significance. The verb in *samvada* (*sam* + *√vad*) is intransitive. It does not have space to accommodate any "object" in its thematic grid. The verb *√vad* requires only a self-contained, self-affected and self-reflective agent. This is a *samvada* with the self and does not necessarily *communicate* any explicit *message* as such in the first place,⁷ but is of course, by implication, concerned with many aspects of the human condition, and with forms of discourse. But this is the all-pervasive Self, and its dialogue constitutes "a self-contained text" in a sense. We may write a "biography" of this "closed text" by depending on its inner conceptual structures and evidences.

⁶ *Rudrayamala Tantra* is an exception in this regard in which Ananda Bhairava asks questions and Ananda Bhairavi answers.

⁷ *Anuttaram katham deva sadyah kaulikasiddhidam yenavijñātmātreṇa khecarī-samatām vrajet* (*Paratrishika-vivaraṇa* 1).

Indian theoreticians discuss another interesting parameter in order to classify Indian verbal discourses: the nature of statements and their relationship with the audience. Three modes of *upadesha* (expression/dialogue) have been recorded:

1. *prabhu sammita*: characterised by *shabda* and authoritativeness (e.g. the *Veda*).
2. *subrid sammita*: characterised by the authority of the friend/well-wisher where *artha*/intended meaning is more important (*smṛti/purāṇa*) than the verbal choice.
3. *kanta sammita*: characterised by *rasa* (charm), like the words of a beloved/wife.

The *agama*, like the words of a beloved/wife, comes under the third category, to which also belongs *kavya* (literature) (*Kavyaprakāśa* 1.2). Here neither authoritative words, (*parusha* harsh words) as in *prabhu sammita*, nor the *artha*/or intended meaning, as in *subrid sammita*, are of much importance. As *kanta samuddesha*, literature offers every *puruṣārtha* (the four-fold goals of life, as also offered by the other *śāstras*: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *mokṣa*) but in a more intimate, aesthetic and suggestive fashion as opposed to other discourses.

Agama or *tantra* also involves a "vision" (*darśhana*) of reality. Just as the *Vedas* remained the major sources of all the "theistic" and "atheistic" (strictly in the Indian context, where the acceptability of the *Veda* as the most prominent source of knowledge is understood) principles and philosophical systems, in the same way, *agama* is the

source of all the Shaiva and the Shakta philosophical systems, like *Pratyabhijñā* (Recognition), *Kula*, *Krama*, *Vira-Shaiva*, *Siddhanta Shaiva*, *Lakulisha* *Pashupata*, and many other cults, like *Tripura*, *Tara*, etc. *Agama* also pertains to the *Vaishnava* (*Pancharatra*) *Shakta*, *Bauddha*, *Jaina* tantric systems. In the *Kulārṇava Tantra*, *Shiva* declares, "For the four *yugas* (ages) there are four corresponding literatures." For the *Satya*yuga, it is the *Vedas* (from *apāurusheya*/non-contingent texts), for the *Treta*, it is the *Smṛitis* (recollected texts); for the *Dvāpara*, it is the *Purāṇas* (mythical accounts), and for the *Kaliyuga*, it is the *Agamas* (*Baladev Upadhyaya, Bharatiya Darśhana* 435). The Shaiva-Shakta schools, especially the one that flourished in Kashmir and adjacent areas in the seventh and eighth centuries, excelled in the cultivation of disciplines like philosophy, poetics, aesthetics, art and *tantra*.

Shaivism, especially Kashmir Shaivism, is perhaps the least studied chapter of Indian philosophy. Scholars have often sounded its richness, intellectual input and relevance (cf. the extensive work done by Professor K. C. Pandey, Thakur Jaideva Singh, Navajivan Rastogi, Baljit Nath Pandit, Dr. Parmahans Mishra, Dr. R. S. Dviwedi, Dr. Vraj Vallabha Dviwedi). But as mentioned above, *agamic* works are governed by different assumptions, and these works can be maintained only within a living tradition, as they are both "system" as well as "application," and in the absence of this tradition, many commonplace instructions and topics have fallen into oblivion already.

Further, one *agama* relates to another for its meaning and constitution. Abhinava himself names and quotes from 182 *agamic* texts in his *Tantraloka* (TL), but most of them are no more available; Rajanaka Jayaratha, in his celebrated commentary on the *Tantraloka*, the *Viveka*, records 275 tantric texts.⁸ In addition to this vast literature, a large number of statements, whose sources have been left unstated, have been marshalled, either to support or to refute arguments throughout both the *Tantraloka* and its commentary the *Viveka*. The amount of scholarship that may be required even for a partial understanding of such a tradition is daunting. Thousands of invaluable *agamic* manuscripts are as yet lying in dark corners in various libraries, and it is questionable whether they will ever see the light of day. Some texts, such as those that were published under the auspices of the government of Jammu and Kashmir or under royal patronage, have been out of print for long. The surviving texts need rigorous editorial and textual scholarship, and need to be translated into modern Indian and world languages for wider readership and dissemination. Here, I would like to record my sincerest gratitude to the Siddh Guru Peetha of Ganeshpuri (Thane, Maharashtra), which has made available online some eighty texts. It goes without saying that many more such dedicated academic efforts are a primary necessity. Without the able guidance of a competent teacher coming from the tradition of the *agama* itself,

agamic works are extremely difficult to study. It is again sad to note that the field has literally become void after the most outstanding scholar and *yogi* of the Shaiva traditions of Kashmir, Shri Lakshman Joo Maharaj, left the world of *adhvan*/impure principles some five years ago. Though the late Maharaj-ji initiated a number of scholars into work in Kashmir Shaiva philosophy, his presence cannot but be missed.

One may want to speculate as to why the major theoreticians of Indian poetics and aesthetics belonged to Kashmir and are associated, either professedly or in some other way, with the Shaiva philosophical systems. For centuries Kashmir remained one of the most illustrious seats of learning for the Buddhists (Fourth Buddhist council, Kashmir *Abhidharmika*) and the Shaivites up to the end of the twelfth century. Bhamaha, Vamana, Udbhata, Anandavardhana, Kuntaka, Bhatta Tauta, Vamanagupta, Mahimabhata, Rudrabhatta, Mammata, Mankhaka (Ruyyaka), Jayaratha and many more belong to Kashmir. Mahamaheshvara Sri Abhinavaguptapadacharya is, of course, the most celebrated and authoritative exponent of the *tantra*, the poetics, the aesthetics and the philosophy of Kashmir. Questions about the relevance of studying his works do not even arise because it is an unquestionable fact that no substantive discussion of poetics, aesthetics, Tantra, music and philosophy can exclude his contributions in these domains of knowledge.

Philosophy, in the sense of "vision"

⁸ For a detailed list with complete referential details see *Tantralokah*, ed. R. C. Dwivedi and Navajivan Rastogi (1: 253-83, 286-345).

(*darshana*), is also a way of experiencing reality: in this it comes close to the basic assumptions of literature and literary theories. There is no obvious gap or opposition between these two disciplines, particularly in the Indian context. In fact, Indian intellectual discourses are characterised by the inter-disciplinarity and integrity of their thought-systems.⁹ The distinction between literature and philosophy becomes more superficial when we examine these two disciplines with reference to the Trika system of Kashmir. Not only do they share common theoretical assumptions, but also, to a great extent, even the methods, devices and modes of exposition are also similar if not identical. A poet, like a philosopher, also relies on the same valid means of knowledge. It is the epistemology of mental modes or experiential contents in the receptive self that matters more in the domain of literary creativity.¹⁰ The great traditions of *tantra*, philosophy and poetics culminate in Acharya Abhinavagupta and his magnum opus, the *Tantraloka*, which is not only an encyclopedic work of *Tantra* philosophy but also the most authoritative and authentic exposition of this system. The theoretical assumptions of *pratyabhijñā* (theory/philosophy of recognition), *abhāsa* (Realistic Idealism or theory of appearance), *svatantrya* (theory of absolute freedom of will), *bimba-pratibimbavada* (theory of image and counter-image) and the concept of

pratibha (intuitive experience or knowledge) provide an extensive background for his philosophical and literary expositions (see Pandey 319), which are further strengthened by reference to concepts like *ananda*, *ullasa*, *rasa*, *dhvani*, *vak*, *anubhavana* (aesthetic reception), *anukirtana*, *sadrishya*, *sajatiya*, *upalakshana*, *nairmalya*, *upaya* and many more, so frequently used in philosophy and literary theory. Throughout the last millennium, Abhinavagupta with his two exceptionally rich literary commentaries, the *Dhvanyalokalochedana* and the *Abhinavabharati* (ABh), has always been conspicuously present in the domains of literature and aesthetics. In fact, no discussion in Indian philosophy, poetics and aesthetics can be considered complete and conclusive without taking into account the contribution of Acharya Abhinavagupta.

The existing literature in this area is mainly of historical and philosophical nature. For example, Professor K. C. Pandey's pioneering works (1959, 1963, 1986) take into account a number of the issues involved, such as the problems in the way of accurately dating these texts, ascribing authorship and origin/evolution of the Shaiva philosophical system along with their major premises. Professor V. Raghavan (1940, 1973 and 1980) has, in his works, explored the question of the number of *rasas* and the concepts of *alamkara shastra*. Professor Gnoli's work (1968) offers an insightful exposition of

⁹ *Śāstram hi śāstrāntarānubandhi*, "one discipline is intrinsically associated with other disciplines."

¹⁰ In the words of Kavikulaguru Kalidas, *satām hi sandehapadeṣu vastuṣu pramāntaḥ pravṛttayaḥ*, "for matters beset in doubt, the modes of the receptive self are the valid means or guide" (*Abhijnanashakuntalam* 1.22).

Abhinavagupta's concept of aesthetic experience. The works of Professor G. T. Deshpande (1989; mainly based on K. C. Pandey's *Abhinavagupta* [1963]), B. N. Pandit (1993), M. M. Gopinath Kaviraj (1966), R. K. Kaw (1967), and Dr. Navajivan Rastogi (1987) have generated immense interest among modern scholars and general readers through their rich expositions of Abhinavagupta's aesthetic theory, mainly against the background of Pratyabhijna philosophy. Some modern learned commentaries and translations of the major philosophical and literary commentaries by Thakur Jaideva Singh (1979, 1980, 1982, 1988), Dr. Paramhansa Mishra "Hansa's" brilliant Hindi commentary on the *Tantraloka* along with Rajanaka Jayaratha's commentary, *Viveka*, on the *Tantraloka* and the minor works of Abhinavagupta (1992-99), Acharya Vishveshvara (1973), Jagannath Pathak (1997), Vraj Vallabha Dwivedi (1984, 1988) are also of great value, especially for their philosophical expositions and for making these texts available to a larger readership. Amarjit Kaur (1979) has studied the influence of Indian philosophical systems on Sanskrit poetics. Scholarly interest in Kashmir Shaivism, especially with regard to Abhinavagupta oeuvre, has shown a sustained growth over the last few years, and among the most noteworthy works

that have come out in the last decade or so must be mentioned Andre Padoux's *Vac: The Conception of Word in Selected Hindu Tantras* (1992) and Mark S. G. Dyczkowski's *The Canon of Shaivagama and the Kubjika Tantra of the Western Kaula Tradition* (1988), and his exceptionally productive study of the *Spandakarika* (1994).

But even so, there is no work that examines in detail the interface of Shaiva philosophy and literary theory. As stated above, *agamic* traditions are enriched with philosophic and literary thought; no research project undertaken or completed so far examines them with from the perspective of current debates in literature, philosophy of language, and aesthetics. Shiva is the abode of all fine arts (*lalita kala*, which are sixty-four in number), including grammar: Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* is considered an important work in the *agamic* traditions as well. Unlike modern grammars, the *Ashtadhyayi* contains valid perspectives on history, culture, philosophy and aesthetics. The *Shiva-sutra* (SS, classification of speech sounds in Sanskrit), the division of the work into eight chapters, the number of *sutras*,¹¹ all consolidate the roots and place of *Ashtadhyayi* in the *agamic* traditions, but these aspects of the *Ashtadhyayi* still await a long-overdue scholarly inspection.

Abhinavagupta has been mainly

¹¹ *Ashtaka* (set of eight or eight-fold) is crucial to the Shaiva system. *Abhijnanashakuntalam* begins with the enumeration of the eight *murtis* (images/principles) of Shiva. Abhinavagupta in the *Tantraloka* (volumes 8 and 9) and the *Tantrasara* (TS, ch. 12) records many types of eight-fold sets. The *Panini-sutras*, e. g., 1.1.71 (*ādirantyena sahetā*) and 1.4.54 (*svatantraḥ kartā*), have been produced at several places in support of philosophical arguments by both Abhinavagupta and his celebrated commentator on the *Tantraloka*, Rajanaka Jayaratha. See also chapter 3 of the *Tantrasara*.

studied as a literary and philosophical commentator. It is strange that no study has yet focussed upon the unity and integrity that characterises his poetics and aesthetics. Even among philosophers, he is best known as a philosopher of the Pratyabhijña school. His deep interest in the Kaula system, of which the *Tantraloka* is remarkable evidence, has been by and large ignored, as has been the indebtedness of his literary expositions to these other sources of the *Trika* system. As Abhinavagupta is a representative of all the branches of Kashmir Shaivism, and his *Tantraloka* the most comprehensive, authoritative and representative text of this system of thought. He himself remarks on the complex and intensive nature of this work in this gloss:

*vitatas Tantrāloko vigābitum naiva
śakyate sarvaiḥ
rjuvacanaviracitamidaṁ tu
Tantrasāraḥ tataḥ śṛṇuṭa.*

(TS 1.2)

That not all are capable of diving deep into the depth of the *Tantraloka*, hence hear this *Tantrasara* (an abridgement of the *Tantraloka*) composed as a lucid statement.

The *Tantraloka* and its compendium *Tantrasara* constitute the multifaceted foundation for Abhinavagupta's literary and aesthetic expositions. The *Tantraloka*, which expounds with crystalline clarity the rich *agamic* traditions of the Kashmir Shaiva philosophy, provides a brilliant background for Abhinava's exposition of *dhvani* and *rasa*, and his literary

commentaries the *Dhvanyalokaloṭhana* and the *Abhinavabharati* also are enriched by the technical terminology of *Trika* philosophy, which he uses freely, assuming his readers have an equal familiarity with the categories he uses. Conceptual terms are discussed and commented upon at length in his philosophical and *tantric* treatises, most specifically, in the *Tantraloka*. This richly intertextual understanding entails that this encyclopedic and *upanishadic* text be studied to understand the interface of Shaiva philosophy and literary theory with specific reference to its major exponent. Philosophy, *tantra* and literature are minutely interwoven in Abhinavagupta's exceptionally voluminous corpus of writings,¹² a rare blend, perhaps singular, in India and in the world, a union very much like the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Sarasvati. The classical debate on the hierarchy of or the rank due to the different human discourses (see Plato's *Republic*, ch. 10, and Aristotle's *Poetics*) and "contest of faculties" does not appear to be very relevant in this context. In keeping with the mode of composition of all the *agamic vanmaya*, the *Tantraloka* is also composed in the form of dialogue. The identity of the listener of this *agamic* discourse remains a secret until one arrives at the final verse (TL 37.85). Paramashiva, in His/Her all-pervasive form, is the sole listener to this *tantra vanmaya*. The identities of the two, the exponent and the listener, get dissolved and the two merge into each other and become one.

¹² Abhinava has forty-one works to his credit, of which only twenty are extant. See Appendix 1.

Indian rational discourses are organised horizontally and not vertically.

In the Indian tradition, there seems always to have been a quest for a comparatively universal basis upon which to lay the foundation of theory, amidst apparent differences, conflict and flux: the existence of differences and flux has, no doubt, been recognised, but only at the surface level. Philosophers and theoreticians in India, as also elsewhere, have always striven for “universals” or “underlying representations,” where all the contesting views submerge in and emerge from the same substratum. It seems to be human destiny to quest for a set of “universals,” because only this can bring integrity and sublimity to our efforts, and bind different individuals (*murti*) “each to each by natural piety” (to borrow from William Wordsworth). A theory expounded with this insight survives the constraints and tests of time and space. No Indian theory in philosophy, literature or any other discipline has ever suffered extinction. The tradition has been characterised as “a perennial flow of the Ganges,” taking on as many hues and forms as the seasons – winter, summer and the rains. Sometimes several tributaries merge to constitute a major current, and, sometimes, the main current splits and flows in many directions. Continuity was a “norm,” not only in language but also in thought and culture in India.

Section 2 of this essay foregrounds the issues and assumptions common to both philosophy and literary theory. It examines and collates the recurrent issues, which Section 3 below will place in the context of the Trika philosophy, outline the nature of the philosophical

system necessary for the emergence of a coherent and comprehensive theory of literature or aesthetics, and examine and evaluate the *agama*-influenced Trika Shaivite school's answers to these all-important questions. In addition to these, an extensive bibliography of primary sources has also been appended in the hope that it may be of use to scholars, old and new, in the area.

Philosophy and Literary Theory: The Shaiva Perspective

In these last three or four decades, the phrase “turn to theory” describes the path academia has taken. A host of post/modern theories ranging from Russian Formalism to post-structuralism have brought about a sea change in the study of literary discourses. These theories place a simple but inescapable condition: approach the work of art with the category of *difference*. Seen from this world-view, the work of art presents multi-layered experiential content intricately interwoven with “binaries” and “differences;” “defamiliarisation” is its constitutive principle. In other words, a work of art and literature is not simply a matter of “enjoyment” but of serious intellectual concern for the artists and the audience/reader. Issues relating to literary creativity, its reception, its status and validity as a discourse of knowledge, the nature of literary experience, etc., have always been a matter of serious debate and discussion in both the Indian and the Western intellectual traditions. In contemporary intellectual discourse, these issues have secured an even more prominent space.

A theory involves a perspective, a point of view, and "an intellectual quest" (in other words, a philosophy). Philosophy, being a vast domain of integrated intellectual activities and also being a "no man's land," as Bertrand Russell would put it, offers more room, as well as competent analytical tools, for "synthetic interpretation" (*shastra paddhati*) for a wide range of intellectual disciplines (see Kapoor 1990).

Literary theory, both in India and the West, has maintained a close affinity with philosophical investigation and speculation right from its creation as a distinct discipline. There is a set of theoretical issues discussed widely in literature and art vis-à-vis philosophy. A literary theory assumes a philosophical context in which it is firmly rooted and in conformity with which it develops its concerns and critiques of reality and the human condition. Literary theory, thus, contextualises and also liberates a work of art from the context. It addresses a set of existential and aesthetic issues and provides a perspective so that the work of art can be foregrounded, examined, interpreted and deconstructed for its multi-foliated conceptual structures. Literary theory thus involves both an internal and a general theory of literary discourses. In the hierarchy of rational discourses, literature figures below philosophy and history (Plato, *The Republic*, ch. 10). While the issues and assumptions the two masters of the Western tradition, Plato and Aristotle, engaged with and formulated have been extensively responded to by critics and theoreticians down the centuries, these issues are still relevant. The gap between literature and philosophy has

narrowed considerably in modern times, and this became possible when literary and aesthetic theories acquired greater autonomy as disciplines. Aesthetics liberated itself from philosophy and established itself as an independent domain of enquiry. Similarly, in the twentieth century literary theory (poetics) came into its own, overstepping the boundaries of literature as such, establishing, instead, free interactions with a number of discourses. Jeremy Hawthorn rightly observes that: "Literary and critical theory today takes its concepts, methods and terms from such a wide range of disciplines and areas of study that to keep abreast of all new developments would involve the sort of study that would probably make it hard to read any literature at all" (vii). While scholars have also remarked upon the growing indifference of contemporary theory to what it is supposed to be a theory of, there is no doubt that the advent of theory has reduced considerably the gap that was thought to exist between philosophy and literature.

We will return to this issue subsequently, but first, in the interests of technical precision and sophistication, we need to distinguish between the three associated terms, poetics, literary criticism and literary theory, which we use synonymously in general discussion on literature and aesthetics. Rene Wellek, for instance, distinguishes "literary theory," the study of the principles of literature, its categories, criteria and the like, from studies of concrete works of art, which, he says, are either "literary criticism" (primarily static in approach) or "literary history"

(1). Rejecting terms like "literary scholarship," "poetics," and so on, he attempts to defend the English term "literary theory" a possible alternative to the German *literaturwissenschaft*, as the "science of literature," which does not exclude criticism, evaluation and speculation in the way "literary scholarship" seems to. Nor does it leave out the theory of other genres (such as the novel) as "poetics" does, because, in English, "poetry" is still largely restricted to verse and has not assumed the boarder sense of the German *dichtung* or the Sanskrit *kavya*, besides seeming to have "the handicap of suggesting prescriptive poetics: a set of principles obligatory for practicing poets" (2).

Though literary criticism implies a theory of literature, it is possible to maintain a distinction between the two categories. Literary theory takes into consideration larger, common issues like literature as ontology and epistemology, the relationships of author, reader and text to one another, literary meaning, the nature of verbal discourse, creativity and creative process, reception, validity of literary statements and several other principles and criteria of literature. Literary criticism is concerned with the merit of literary composition, its craft and style, the form and content of the individual work, its distinctive features, its language, rhetoric, etc. Kapil Kapoor observes that literary criticism may take up any or all of the criteria of literary theory with reference to concrete works of art: literary criticism can, and often does, include reference to literary theory, in such collocations as "theoretical literary criticism," as against "applied literary criticism" (1995: 27).

As poetics also involves an internal theory of literature, we may use this term to mean literary theory also, but the term needs to be further contextualised in the Indian *kavya* traditions, where we do not encounter the difficulties that led to Wellek's rejection of the term "poetics" as an equivalent for "literary theory." In Sanskrit, *kavya shastra*, *kavya vidya* or *sabitya shastra/vidya* not only discuss the general crafts and rhetoric of poetry, but also the theoretical and philosophical issues pertinent to this domain of enquiry.

In India, philosophy and literary theory seem to have been always intertwined, right from the formation of the discipline as Bhamaha suggests (see *Kavyalamkara*, ch. 5 and 6). All the major literary theories and their exponents are related, directly or otherwise, to one or the other of the important Indian philosophical systems: *rasa*, *alamkara*, *riti*, *auchitya*, *vakrokti*, *dhvani*, *guna* and *dosha* all originate from or anticipate some philosophical context. The "contests of faculties," the "hierarchies" of the human discourses – a prime preoccupation in Western thought – do not hold much relevance in the poetic traditions of India. A statement in literature is as valid as a statement in, say, philosophy, and was often quoted by philosophers and thinkers to expound and support their own theoretical positions. Similarly, philosophy runs through all the major literary works like the undercurrents of Sarasvati – one cannot think of a better example than the *Srimadbhagavad-gita*, a profound philosophical treatise (*upanishad*), which is also the very heart

of the unparalleled encyclopedic epic, the *Mahabharata*. Acharya Abhinavagupta and Rajanaka Jayaratha are two outstanding examples of the interhatching of the concerns and insights of these two disciplines. We will provide a Shaiva perspective to this distinction subsequently, once we have examined some of the preoccupations literary theory and philosophy share in both the Indian and the Western traditions:

1. Nature of reality and its linguistic representation,
2. Nature and status of representation/representability of reality in art,
3. Nature and source of artistic creativity,
4. Status of literature as a discourse of knowledge
5. Literature as linguistic/verbal discourse,
6. Literary meaning, and
7. *Pratibha* in philosophy, language and poetics.

We will now proceed to examine these from the perspective of Indian philosophy, and more specifically, from the purview of the Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir.

Nature of Reality and its Linguistic Representation

The Western perception of language is essentially representational.

Representation pre-supposes some present entity that is to be presented or imitated (*mimesis*). It also entails that any work of art or literature has to

capture this *ideal* object, and since the idea and its representation (image) can never be replicated in all their ontological and epistemological aspects, no representation can be said to be perfect. Moreover, the essential nature of an object can never be represented. Just as a tree in a painted picture cannot be the same as a real tree – a tree grows and provides shade, as it is an ontological entity, whereas the picture of the tree is devoid of such essential attributes – a representation is always partial, and the moment it is equal to the actual object in all aspects, the representation/image will cease to exist. This further implies that the validity of knowledge acquired through representation will always remain secondary; and since all literary and artistic creativity involves imitation, these are denied status as valid discourses of knowledge.

Representation through the medium of language makes the problem more complex. To what extent is language a competent means of representing reality? Does language represent reality or does it alter it, in the sense that the reality represented in language is of different nature and possesses different characteristics? The issue relates to literature too, as literature is a linguistic construct or enterprise in the first place. It is in this regard that Plato makes his famous objections about art and literature. In Plato's ontology, the ideal is real, universal and unique, and is the source of all creativity, the world being but a projection of this ideal. The prototypical artist in Plato's philosophy is the carpenter, who deals in spatio-temporal reality: he quantifies, cuts, and rearranges the parts out of the integral

whole of the log of wood. The couch that he makes is the first deviation (*bhaga*) from the ideal image of it. Next, a painter depicts this couch in the form of a picture, this being the second deviation. Third comes the poet, who describes the object in words, and hence, literature is thrice removed or displaced from reality (*The Republic*, ch. 10).

The involvement of language makes the depiction of reality somehow more complex. Language always involves a space, an absence, and difference. It hides as well as reconstitutes reality. Differences among individuals are quite explicit even though they belong to the same conceptual category: no two cows are the same, but the same term is applied to all individual cows. The difference existing between the two individuals is lost through this process of "languageing." Similarly, language creates differences and discreteness in the single cognition or event. For instance, "Hari cooks rice" is a single event, and all the components are integrated into each other, but in language, it appears as if three discrete objects have been sequentially arranged. Moreover, language foregrounds form rather than substance: the moment we make a pitcher, its substance, the lump of clay, gets hidden. The same substance may, however, be given another form, and language will bestow upon that particular form a particular name: for example, "elephant."

A number of questions arise here about the representation or imaging principle in language. What is the nature of these images? An image is a conceptual construct of the ontological entity, and a sense of meaning and

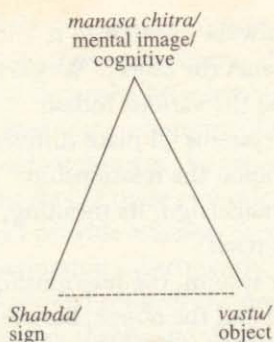
alternative is always implicit in it – it always re-presents the object. Western scholarship and the various Indian philosophical systems all place different constructions upon the relationship between the image/sign, its meaning, and the object itself.

In a realist system, the relationship between a sign and the object, between the word and the world, is direct because such a system expounds that the world of our experience is real and it is *namadheya* (nameable) and *abhidheya* (knowable). A sign or image is ascribed greater epistemological strength in a realist system. In the taxonomy of Indian philosophical systems, the Mimamsa and Nyaya-Vaisesika systems represent this school of thought. The direct relationship that holds between word and the object here can be illustrated as follows:

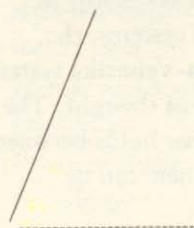
<i>vikalpa</i>	<i>padartha</i>
(word)	(object/ image)

Such systems posit that the image or *vikalpa* is positive, real, ontological, universal and individual and direct. Naturally, *shabda* is a valid means of knowledge in this system. We do not know of any Western counterpart of this philosophical system.

In an idealist system like Vedanta and Vyakarana, it is a mental image, indirect, both individual as well as universal, and of form and substance identical with the object, given (*nitya*) and ontological (*padartha rupa*). This involves a three-fold relationship between the image/word, mental image and the object, which can be illustrated thus:



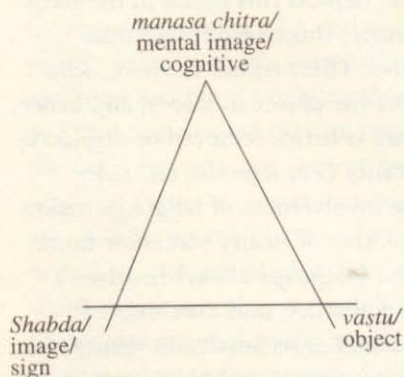
Though belonging to the same idealist fold, the Buddhist school of thought offers a rather more complex picture of this relationship, which can be illustrated as follows:



In the Buddhist system, as expounded by Dinaga and Dharmakirti, following upon a long tradition of thought, a sign is only *vikalpatamaka* (conceptual or imaginative), *apohatmaka* (differential), unreal, universal and pragmatic. It has no ontological validity and even in epistemology, its domain is strictly defined as *samvritti* (phenomenal), which cannot even touch the ontological entity (Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic* 403).

Finally, the Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir, which posits the theory of *abhāsa* and *svatantrya* (appearance and absolute freedom of creative will), evolves a position that is unique amongst Indian theories of meaning. Though the Shaiva philosophers nowhere discuss any theory of meaning

explicitly, drawing upon their theoretical accounts, we may present the following diagram:



In this system, *shabda*, in all its three meanings as speech sound, word and language, is ontological and real. The system acquires a unique, synthetic position, at the median between the two extremes of the Nyaya and the Buddhist systems of thought. Between the extremes of "everything exists" and "nothing exists," typified by the Nyaya and Buddhist systems of thought, the Shaiva system holds that every appearance is real, as these are partial or complete manifestations of the ultimate reality, Paramashiva. Also, the relation that holds between different objects or appearances is very much real, as nothing is isolated from its sole substratum. Naturally, the relationship that holds between world/image/sign, mental image and object, is real: all three elements are ascribed ontological status in the Shaiva or Trika system of Kashmir, which holds that the manifest world is *vaṅmāya* and blissful projection of the Universal Self.

Thus, we can say that:

1. As compared to the multi-participant discussion on the nature of sign, its epistemic and ontological concerns and the relationship between the three components of signification in the Indian traditions, the West presents a singular picture that can be broadly represented by what we know as Ogden-Richard's Triangle.
2. In all these philosophical systems, Indian or Western, there is no denial of the cognitive nature of sign. In the Indian tradition, Bhartrihari, the foremost of all the philosophers of language, categorically declares that our knowledge is simply a linguistic construct.

Nature and Status of Representation of Reality in Art

Representation is an important issue in both art and aesthetics. Here, what is of concern to us is the relationship of a depiction to that which it is a depiction of. Representation as a term is commonly used to refer to pictorial representation, i.e., to say that a portrait or picture of Shakespeare represents Shakespeare. There may be many representations in the same relation with the original object, here Shakespeare. Plato's *Republic* again remains the primary text in this regard. Socrates says that a painter is a craftsman in the same way as anyone would be just such a "craftsman" if he/she were to carry around with him/her a mirror capable of reflecting objects. Like other artistic activities, painting also involves a

process of mimesis. Modern scholars, like Hans Georg Gadamer among several others, find the translation of mimesis as "imitation" too narrow. Mimesis also involves a process, and a sense of making the absent present, which once allows the relevance of sheer imitation and makes more sense of the ontological upshot of Plato's treatment. Indian aesthetics discusses this issue at great length: see, for instance, texts like *Shukranitisara*, *Panchavimsa Brahmana*, *Divyavadana*, *Aitareya Brahmana* and several others. There is, however, a significant difference between representation through symbol and representation through picture, as the former is always indirect and involves mental processing, while the latter facilitates direct, visual perception.

All art is imagination or the presentation of a series of images that relates to what was originally in the mind of the artist. The *Aitareya Brahmana* states, "it is *anukriti* (imitation) of the *deva* (angelic) work of *shilpa* (art) that is *adhigama* (arrived) here. A true work of art is accomplished in him who comprehends this" (6.27). Imaging in the Indian system is a form of yoga, and only with this power of concentration can an artist visualise a form like the cosmic dancer, Shiva (Nataraja), in his mind and externalise it later on. Image-making is so crucial to pagan cultures like India and ancient Greece that all the primary cultural facets of these peoples manifest through it. Masson-Oursel rightly observes that "Indian art is aiming at something quite other than coping with nature. What we assume, quite superficially, to be the

inspiration of art for art's sake really proceeds from a religious scholasticism that implies a traditional classification into types established by convention. If here or there, a relief or painting exhibits some features drawn from life, it is only accidentally that the artist has, in spite of himself, transcribed from something in Nature; and this is certainly, from the indigenous point of view, the least material part of his work" (qtd. in Coomaraswamy, 1994: 117).

The Indian and the Western traditions, thus, differ significantly with regard to the nature of representation in art. Mimesis remains the central principle, but where it is the close imitation of Nature that brings aesthetic merit and excellence to a work of art in the Western context, the Indian view attaches more importance to creativity. Just as language is a creative or constitutive principle in Indian thought, similarly, image-making also involves great creativity on the part of the artist or creator, who thus enjoys great liberty. Representation in the Indian context can only be studied at different times as involving a greater or less degree of consciousness, a greater or lesser energy, and the like, the criteria are degrees of vitality, unity, grace, and so on, but never that of illusion (ibid 117). The creative process and objective of representation in the Indian tradition differs significantly from that in the Western, for, here, the creative process involves a deep meditation in which the object is clearly visualised, and then there remains the secondary stage of manifesting it through the medium the artist is working in. The Shaiva system,

in its theory of *abhāsa*, expounds that for an artist or a poet, even appearance is sufficient for his purpose in that it is as real as the object itself. A perspective of this kind can emerge only if a philosophical system is most comprehensive, enabling it thus to make itself consistent with all the forms of reality. Hence, we may conclusively submit that Western notions of the nature of artistic representation do not ascribe as much validity to representation as do Indian thoughts thereon.

Nature and Source of Artistic Creativity

What about the nature of creativity, its sources and the status of artist? Is creativity a deliberate or conscious effort or it is the outcome of some inspiration, of some unpremeditated spontaneous overflow? And what is the artist? Is he a creator or a craftsman? If he is a creator, then he is a divinely inspired being, and the work itself is a product of this divine inspiration – this, broadly, is the view upheld by the Romantic traditions of the West, as manifested in the poetical and critical writings of the British Romantics, like Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, etc. Here, the imagination is the chief source of creativity, which is defined as "divine inspiration or intuition." Of all the British Romantic poets, Blake's conception of imagination seems to be the most revolutionary and visionary: "One power alone makes a poet: Imagination, the Divine Vision," he declares (qtd. in Bowra 14). In this conception of creativity, the imagination

creates a reality, and this reality, which has been called divine, is possible through "unimpeded energy." This is also an activity of turning objects into symbols of greater realities. Blake, in his exceptionally prophetic style, expounds that "this world of imagination is the world of eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall go after the vegetated body" (ibid 3). Coleridge says of this creative process: "it was the union of deep feeling with profound thought, a fine balance of truth in observing, with divine imaginative faculty in modifying the object of obscured" (*Biographia Literaria* 7). In the same tradition of creativity and its source (i.e., divine inspiration), Shelley wishes to become "thy lyre" or the divine lyre. Here, the artist is not free to choose or decide the subject matter of his work: a divine wish manifests through him and he has only to be its competent instrument, and therein lies his greatness or originality.

Contrary to this notion is the concept of the artist as a craftsman, who is free to choose the object of representation. Reason, and not imagination, is his guiding principle, and through it he enjoys more freedom of activity in relation to his work. His creativity is, thus, a rational process, and art is a deliberate and well-thought-out product of reason.

The Classical and Romantic approaches also differ significantly with respect to their views on language as a medium of expression and also as the content of thought. As a craftsman, an artist is the master of his medium, which he manipulates, and through this process, creates meaning. As a creator,

the medium exists outside the domain of his will and a reality autonomous of the creator manifests through it (see Kapoor, 1995: 32-33).

Indian thinkers advance a more coherent and comprehensive exposition of the nature and sources of artistic creativity. Here, the artist or poet, before getting involved in the actual creation, goes into deep meditation, and concentrating thus, he perceives the object of his creation or his art. He is a yogi who creates the object through mental vision; he is not dependent on any *upadana* (material) or *nimitta* (efficient) causes. The form he creates is imminent in the medium; his creativity lies in the manifestation of this form. When the wheel of the potter (unlike the carpenter, the prototypical Western artist) is set in motion, a transformation, or creation, takes place:

1. *dravya* (substance) becomes *rupa* (form),
2. *amurta* (non-manifest) becomes *murta* (manifest), and
3. the real becomes the actual.

When in deep meditation the object is perceived, the artist's task can be taken as having been fully performed rightaway, because what remains is merely a matter of externalisation through an adequate medium. There is a unity of "craft" and "creation" in the Indian view of art. *Shukranitisara* lays equal importance on craftsmanship as well: "only an image made in accordance with the canon can be called beautiful; some may think that beautiful which corresponds to their own fancy, but not in accordance with the canon is unlively

to the discerning life" (qtd. in Coomaraswamy, 1994: 167). The first stage of the process of creativity, when the method of *yog* is employed to achieve the realisation of the identity of consciousness and object, is called the stage of *dhyān mantra*. The second stage is that of making the artifact in accordance with that visualised in the first stage. The third and the final stage involves *para-rupa* (trans-form), where the object seen through mental perception becomes actual. Coomaraswamy enumerates the seven steps of artistic creation, according to Buddhist sources:

1. The artist, (*sadbaka yogin*) ceremonially purifies himself.
2. He withdraws to a solitary place.
3. There he offers daily acts of worship to the deities and the deity.
4. He "must realise in thought the four infinite moods of friendliness, compassion, sympathy and impartiality."
5. Then he must meditate on the vast emptiness (*śūnyata*). (This idea of the abyss destroys the *āhamkāra*, the ego-consciousness.)
6. Then "he should invoke the desired divinity of the desired utterance of the appropriate *bija*." (The mystical letter forming the essential part of the mantra of a deity.)
7. Finally, on pronouncing the *dhyāna mantra* (description of the personal attributes of the deity), the divinity appears visibly, "like a reflection" or "as a dream." (1991: 27)

This process of conceptualisation is also the reason why the technical craftsman in the Indian tradition has been named as *śilpin* (architect), *yogin*, *yogi*, *sadbaka*, *rupakara*, and *pratimakara* (imager). Art is essentially a yoga in this tradition – a yoga of meditation and concentration in which the artist becomes one with his object. It is in this deep concentration that the poet, or any other creative artist, may have visualised the form of Nataraja and his cosmic dance. Tirumular gives a lovely depiction of it this primary visualisation:

The dancing foot, the sound of the
tinkling bells,
the songs that are sung, the various
steps,
the forms assumed by our master as
He dances,
discover these in your own heart,
so all shall your bounds be broken.
(Coomaraswamy,
1994: 166)

As discussed in Section 1 above, *agamic* literature is rich in literary and aesthetic content. This has inspired a number of lovely poetic compositions in which Shiva has been depicted in exceptionally rich fashion. The Trika philosophy of Kashmir, which is rooted in *agama*, posits that the manifest world is *prakashavimarśhamaya*, that is, of the nature of light and consciousness. *Vimarśha* is the creative aspect of Paramashiva, independent and absolute. Even the technical terminology of the Trika philosophy is closely linked to literary and aesthetic issues, so much so that one wonders whether this whole philosophical system may not have developed as an aesthetic philosophy

(SS 3.2.9-11), a speculation strengthened by the notion of the artist as yogi. Like a yogi, or an artist, Shiva, with His Shakti manifests this world on the canvass of His self (PH 2).

Status of Literature as a Discourse of Knowledge

There are two ambivalent views on the status of literature as discourse of knowledge in the Western intellectual tradition. Literary discourse is characterised by the imagination, which is fanciful and charming. The poet largely depends on figurative devices for the expression of his thoughts and feelings. Also, the poet's mode of perception of reality or his approach to reality differs significantly from those of the philosopher or historian. How far, then, is literary discourse reliable as epistemology, and what is the validity and credibility of a statement made by a poet? Is literature a serious discourse at all?

Plato's philosophy is marked by this dichotomy of philosophy and literature or, in other words, the opposition of reason and emotion, and in this hierarchy of discourses, literature is ranked below philosophy and history, and the truth depicted here is thrice removed from reality. The truth of Herodotus is more reliable than that of Homer, since the poet's figurative mode of expression alters reality in a very significant manner. Since poets themselves claim that they compose when they are not in their normal selves (divine madness), Plato is most sceptical about their statements, and he observes that the poets were not able to explain

the meanings of their own poems, which any of the by-standers could have explained better (see *Ion*). If the poet himself is unable to explain his own composition, how far is it justifiable to explore the poet's intention in a work (see *Apology*)? In fact, a hierarchy is implicit in Plato's notion of knowledge and reality. In his ontology, widely known as *line image*, he posits a vertical ordering of knowledge in which the intelligible is higher than the visible. Poets copy the *appearances* of reality, which are illusory in the Platonian paradigm. Plato categorically says:

For surely no craftsman makes the idea itself. It is like reflecting something in a mirror. What we "create" or "craft" is: "the appearance of them, but not the reality ... only a dim adumbration in comparison with reality."

God is "the real author of the couch that has a real being" and the carpenter is the maker of the couch. The painter who paints the couch is an *imitator*. (*The Republic*, bk. 10)

In Plato's philosophy, all arts are mimetic and hence hold less validity in the hierarchy of rational discourses. Since literature is also representational or mimetic by its very definition, it cannot be accepted as a valid means of knowledge. In *Thaetetus* too Plato deliberates upon the nature of knowledge: whether it is positive, differential or negative, though he does not believe in the possibility of a pre-existing knowledge of difference. The Buddhist theory of meaning and knowledge, though a theory of difference, cannot be accommodated in

Plato's theoretical model. Though a theory of *difference*, it engages with major concerns in both Buddhist ontology and epistemology. Moreover, a linguistic sign is a kind of inferential sign in Buddhist thought and it does not involve the *paramartika satta* (transcendental truth).

In Plato's framework, literature is a weak epistemology because it follows appearances, which are illusory and hence unreal, a position countered by his own disciple, Aristotle, who establishes that the actions of human beings are the objects of imitations (*Poetics* 2). Aristotle holds that the truth of poetry is universal and thus not localised like the truth of history or of other disciplines, meaning that in effect, reception and comprehensiveness, poetic truth is far more pervasive than the truth depicted in philosophy or history.

Indian poeticians have also engaged in sophisticated discussions on this issue. *Kavyajñāna* (poetic truth) is compatible with reality. However, there is no doubt that literary expressions are highly symbolic, metaphorical and *defamiliarised* – that is, the poet does not rely so much on the literal meaning of a word, but on implied or suggested sense. In great poetry, the suggested meaning, *vyanjana*, predominates. Literary expressions may be archaic and oblique, and reading them correctly demands rigorous training in poetics and literary theory. It is noteworthy that literary cognition or knowledge has been assigned a distinct category, that of the *alaukika* because it is *vilakṣhaṇa jñāna* (distinct knowledge) (ABh, ch. 6). As experience of the real or the universal

self is also difficult to categorise, both literary experience as well as the experience of Brahman are deemed equal.

Literature as Linguistic/Verbal Discourse

Reality seen through the prism of language is never the same as unmediated reality, if there is such a thing. In using language, we deal with conceptual constructs, and since literature is primarily a linguistic enterprise, all issues related to language are pertinent with respect to literature too. We have already seen, in the classical Western perception of it, language has only a representational role. It is a medium, but has no cognitive role to perform in the theory of knowledge, and this is one of the reasons why literature was denied autonomous status in the classical discursive paradigm. In the Indian perception, however, language is constitutive and cognitive in its very nature, and as the *Rg-veda* declares, language cuts manifold forms in the ocean of reality (*Rg-veda* 1.164.49).

Language is central to all the major philosophical systems. It is not only a medium, but also cognition itself. The linguistic content of the discourse of literature is richer in its cognitive contents and its multi-layered meanings.

Literary Meaning

The West, being a bibliolatrous culture with a central scripture (the Bible), perceives a text as intrinsically related to its author. Thus, the author's meaning

or intention was the goal of literary speculation. The presence of a Book (Logos) at the very root of the culture involves many crucial issues and debates pertinent even to literary and philosophical discourse. It is only recently that the West gave up its belief in the tenets of authorial dominance. The text has been liberated not only from the author's hold, but also from these concepts, to become a self-contained entity. The reader, too, has been given more room for manoeuvre, to constitute his own meanings – which are now open-ended, deferred, and always in flux – out of the conceptual structures implicit in the text. William Ray makes a remarkable observation while reviewing the changes in the conceptualisation of the nature of literary meaning from phenomenology to deconstruction: that meaning, as it pertains to literature, always seems to have at least two meanings, each of which entails a different and, frequently, contrary theory of the literary work, as well as a distinct critical practice (1-2).

Literary meaning has always been a matter of central concern in Indian poetics, as evinced by the fact that the approach to literature has been largely linguistic and textual and by the very real understanding that word and meaning together constitute *kavya* (poetry). Poeticians like Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, and Mammata offer a detailed framework of literary meaning, known as the *dhvani* theory of suggestion. The question of examining authorial intention or meaning in reading the Indian classical texts does not arise, because the author,

as per the Western notion, does not exist here. Neither is any claim to originality staked, as the explicit staking of such a claim may only lower the status of the exponent, even if he is remarkably original and fresh in his vision and mode of exposition.

Pratibha in Philosophy, Language and Poetics

Western linguistic and literary theories refer to "innate ability" and "genius" as the sources of creativity and reception of the work of art in literature and aesthetics. *Pratibha* (*prati+bha+ka+tap*) has several meanings, like vision, light, intellect, imaginative faculty and counter-image or reflection (*pratibimba*). It has been central to the philosophical linguistic and poetic speculations of Indian theoreticians. Three terms – *pratibha*, *shakti* and *vimarsha* – are synonymous in all the three disciplines of philosophy, language and literary theory. Mammata (KP 1.1) and Rudrata (KL 115.17) prefer the term *shakti*, which is a technical term in Trika philosophy and identical with the power of Shiva. This has several names like *vimarsha*, *chaitanya*, etc., and this is the power through which the Supreme Self manifests His creation. Bhartrihari offers a full-fledged formulation of the doctrine of *pratibha* in his *Vakyapadiya*, where he also discusses the concept of *pratibha* in the context of grammar – this is the ability of comprehend sentential meaning (VP, kanda 2).

The above is an examination of the most vital issues that have been discussed at length in the disciplines of both literature and philosophy, and that

have contributed to enriching each other's domain of enquiry. The gap deemed to exist between philosophy and literature, as per Plato's framework, has been bridged in contemporary discourses through the acceptance of the fact that language is at the heart of the matter. The philosophy of language studies both philosophy and literature, underwritten by the understanding that the concerns of language are not merely linguistic, but also philosophical and literary.

Samavesha: Literary theory and Agamic Principles

There is a close affinity between Shaivagama and literature: no ontological barrier *per se* exists between them. Shiva is the abode of all the fine arts, including language (grammar) and literature. Due to the centrality of *pravritti* (inclination towards the mental modes), *abhasa* (appearance), *svatantrya* (freedom of absolute will) and the unique concept of Universal and individual self, the Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir acquires a conspicuous position not only in the taxonomy of Indian philosophical systems but also in the twin domains of aesthetics and poetics. Many core issues and assumptions in poetics and aesthetics – such as the nature of verbal discourse, the validity of literature as a discourse of knowledge, the creative process and the process of reception of a work of art – have sound philosophical bases in as well as the support of the Trika system of Kashmir, which itself is preceded by a long tradition of *agamic* thought. Abhinavaguptapadacharya is,

beyond doubt, its most authoritative exponent.

Trika philosophy holds that the manifest world is contracted and gross, very much like a work of literature or *objet d'art* fossilised in its semantic and experiential content. Nevertheless, both are very much real and identical with the Universal or the individual self. The Universal Self has a desire to project Himself (*sisriksa*). One may ask why He has this desire in the first place. The response of the Shaiva theoretician is two-fold. Firstly, for him, this question is redundant. It is His *dharma* or *svabhava* (essential nature), just as it is the *svabhava* of fire to illuminate. Secondly, it is His principle of absolute free will to manifest the world, *citiḥ svatantrā viśvasiddhibhetuḥ* (PH 1). The message in this assumption is that an attempt to approach/read His world/work, as a *message* or as *intention* is simply a prelude to the occlusion of its very nature and may only generate debate. What we know as creation (also as a literary creation) is only the ultimate contraction, *Parama sankocha*, of its creator. In Shaiva ontology, the creative principle necessarily traverses a sequence, a sequence from *shiva* to the earth principles, from the subtlest to grossest possible, from unlimited and unbounded to limited, and having “a local habitation and a name” (see Appendices 2-4) Though both the creator and his creation are essentially one, like image and counter-image, they can never be equated and this makes the involvement of an experiencer/reader even more crucial and complex. It is now the role of the reader/experiencer to

deconstruct or disseminate its content. One may understand why there is such a great emphasis on the qualification of the recipient or the viewer in philosophy and literary theory from their very creation as intellectual discourses in India, for it is the response of the reader or viewer that will make the creative process complete and meaningful. His/her journey will begin against the current, i.e. from gross to the most subtle. It is in this sense that art acquires a form of *yoga* – through the deep concentration of the receptive self and the giving up of all the distinctive marks (*sadharanikṛita*) that are only forms of bondage, a viewer/reader becomes part of this process of reception. The creative and receptive processes are not isolated processes, but are complementary and are rooted in the same substratum. Indian literary and aesthetic theories make the very same demand on their audience or readers. The notion of *śiṣṭa*, in the sense of the *ideal*, is implicit in poetics as in grammar. Only a *sabridaya* can fulfill this function. He/she must be capable of receiving the *pratibimba* (counter-image) and of becoming one with the object of art (*sadharanikarana*, *tanmayibhavana*, *nairmalya*).

As per this system, every *abhasa* (appearance), partial or whole, is real as it is the manifestation of the real substratum (*Paramashiva*). Taking a cue from this, Rajashekhara was, much later, in the *Kavyamimamsa* (KM), to declare that mere appearances suffice for literary composition (ch. 9). Anandavardhana quotes a verse in support of his argument of the freedom of absolute

creative will: *apāre kāvyasaṁsāre kavirekaḥ prajāpatiḥ, yathāśmai rocate viśvaṁ tatbedam parivartate*/(DLL, ch.3). (The same two verses, and another that follows the one quoted above, are also found in the *Ashtaprakaraṇam* 339.10-11). In fact, Rajashekhara, with great courage, accepts *kavisamaya* (poetic conventions) as *pramana* (a valid means of knowledge) (KM ch. 18, on the Division of Time), while Abhinavagupta himself quotes Kalidasa's *Abhijñānashakuntalam* as an *arsha* (source) text in his philosophical expositions for the support of his thesis. We may ask, where does the inspiration and theoretical support come from, save the Trika philosophy of Kashmir, emanating from the *agamic* systems, for we do not hear of any related discussion in any of the other sixteen philosophical systems (vide Madhavacharya's *Sarvadarśhanasamgraha*).

In fact, literary and aesthetic experiences are difficult to explicate in non/dualist or other systems. It is irrelevant to think of those systems that believe the world either to be a product of *maya* or *maya* itself and hence unreal. Explication is not possible even in those systems that bring in the notion of duality. The emergence of a coherent aesthetic/literary theory from a specific system of thought sets forth some conditions:

1. That the world of our experience is real, knowable and can be named and expressed in language: in other words, the system must accept *vivarta* as ontologically real, as also invested with epistemic value (unlike Buddhism and Vedānta philosophy).

2. That the individual is equally independent to constitute his/her own semiotic universe, which is no less real: an artist is not necessarily bound to follow the laws of nature, like cause and effect as is necessary in the Nyaya-Vaisesika systems. (Abhinavagupta thus refutes *anumativada*, Shankuka's inferential theory of aesthetic experience.)
3. That the concept of Universal Self is dynamic (like the cosmic dance of Shiva; a creative principle in itself) and there is perennial unity of *prakasha* (power to illuminate) and *vimarsha* (consciousness), *shabda* (word) and *artha* (meaning), *shiva* and *shakti*. (Unlike Samkhya philosophy: Abhinavagupta rejects Bhatta Nayaka's Bhogavada theory of aesthetics, which is based on Samkhya.)
4. That the partial manifestation (like the sixteenth *kala* of the moon or reflection of the image in the mirror) also holds integrity and completeness with respect to the whole.
5. That system must accommodate the instinctive modes of mind and involve a cognitive mechanism of purification of *ashuddha vikalpa* (impure mental constructs) (TS, ch. 4).
6. That the self and the universal self exist face to face (like the image and counter-image in a mirror) and recognise each other as one (*advaita*).
7. That the experience is essentially of the nature of *ananda*: *sadyah paranirvrtaye* (K.P. 1.2).
8. That the experiencer and the observer are united in the same self, *vide* the Vedic metaphor of two friendly birds sitting side by side on the same branch of the tree: one is the experiencer and the other is just the witness. For the aesthetic experience, this picture/metaphor needs to be modified (*Mundaka-Upanishad* 3.1.1).
9. The witness bird is also aesthetically involved as a *sabridaya*, a *sabridaya* whose heart is not devoid of desire or defiled by impure uncontrollable desires, but is full of *shuddha vasana*.¹³

Such are the conditions that create an environment conducive to the emergence of aesthetic and poetic theories with sound philosophical support. And these are fulfilled only by the non-dualist *agama*, of which the Trika system is a splendid development. This is why only the Trika system was able to formulate the theoretical concerns of art and aesthetics with such sophistication and virtuosity. The poeticians who belonged to this system, either directly or indirectly – best exemplified by Abhinavagupta and Mammata – were able to create, by applying the same principles, concepts, devices and modes of exposition to poetics and aesthetics both, an illuminating and comprehensive discussion on art and literature.

There is no evaluative parameter involved in considering and examining a work of art. A work of art that allows the knower/experiencer (*sabridaya*) to

¹³ See Dr. Ramamurti Tripathi, "Rasa tattva, rasānubhūti aur āvaraṇabhaṛiga," in *Purvagraha* 112 (1999).

become one (*tanmayibhuta*) with it is "ideal." A *nata* (performer) is also not concerned with the audience but only his/her own sphere of activity, i.e. perfecting his/her performance, becoming one with what he/she is enacting. The audience has to be a *sabridaya*. Moreover, the poet/performer, the viewer, and the work of art itself, must be free from all the delimiting factors (see the ABh, ch. 6, for an enumeration of the seven types of *rasa-vighna*) that obstruct the unification of these three elements into one. The dissolution of this trinity (*triputi laya*) is an absolute necessity for undergoing an aesthetic experience.

As discussed above, the aesthetic theory that emerges from the Shaiva system poses strict qualifying conditions on the audience as well. He/she must be a *sabridaya* (lit. "of the same heart"), capable of becoming one, without effort (*anupaya*), with the art object. To experience a work of art, an experience towards which we all instinctively lean, means to experience the primordial unity of the *shiva* and *shakti tattva* (principles), which are characterised by *chit* and *ananda shakti* (powers of foundational consciousness or the unchanging principle of all change and blissfulness) (TL 3.210, IPV 1.5-14,

VBh 73).¹⁴ This is identical with the experience of the self (*ahampratyaya*) – knowledge of the nature of the recognition (*pratyabbijna*). To experience the aesthetic content of a work of art, one has to become a *pramat*, knower/experiencer (PH 3)¹⁵ of *vidyeshvara*,¹⁶ where the experience of the self and the universe are both distinct and equally matched, but the universe appears as an aspect of our own self.

Art, in this regard, is a form of yoga,¹⁷ rather a *sabajayoga* (concentration, effortless concentration). This thesis also gets support from Vamana's endorsement when he introduces the concept of *avadhana*, i.e. the concentration or focussing of the receptive self on the desired object in poetics (KLS 1.3.7). In this process, the mind becomes like a clean mirror – capable of receiving the reflection of the object. But this is just one aspect of the self, i.e. the aspect of *prakasha*. The other essentially integral aspect of the self is *vimarsha*, the absolute power to manifest, generate and reconstitute the experience received from the various external or internal sources. This aspect of the Universal/individual self, also known as *pratibha*,¹⁸ is what brings about a greater synthesis of the discrete

¹⁴ Srinivasacharya, in his commentary on the *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, quotes from some authority that wherever a histrionic representation takes place, Shiva dwells there. This also has the support of the *Natyashastra* (chapters 35/36) in the context of *purvaranga*.

¹⁵ See also Jaidev Singh's endnote on p. 130 (1980).

¹⁶ This is Jayaratha's expressed in his commentary (G. T. Deshpande, *Abhinavagupta* [1995, Hindi]: 72).

¹⁷ Vachaspati Misra prefers the etymological derivation of the term *yoga* from the verb root *vyuj-a*, "to concentrate" (*Dhatupatha* 4.68) to the verb root *vyuj-i*, "to join yoke" (*Dhatupatha* 7.7).

¹⁸ *Vimarsha*, *pratibha*, *chiti*, *evatamtrya*, *spanda*, *shakti* are all synonymous in the Trika philosophy.

elements (such as individual words in a sentence, or many *karanas* and *angaharas* in histrionic representation) and constitutes a single cognition or experience. In aesthetics, this power of the individual has been termed as *charvana* (lit. chewing; relishing, enjoying) and *bridayasamvada* (dialogue with the self). Abhinavagupta maintains that such a person, possessing intuitive power, is qualified (*adbikari*) for the reception of aesthetic content (DLL 1.1).

Tanmayibhavana is a central concept and one of the most recurring topics of discussion in *agamic* literature and poetics. The *Tantraloka*, *Tantrasara*, and other *agamas*, like the *Vijnanabhairava*, return to this topic time and again. *Tanmayibhavana* is the goal of both the *agamic* rituals and literature. *Natya* is also a form of ritual through which we give up our narrow selves and experience *mahabhava*,¹⁹ overriding being evoked by aesthetic experience.

Abhinavagupta's exposition of *dhvani* and *rasa* are only the two aspects (like *prakasha* and *vimarsha*) of the same aesthetic or poetic principle. Words/signs are essentially of the nature of *sanketa* (indicators). In great poetry, there is an optimal exploitation of this *sanketa shakti* or *vyanjana shakti*.

According to Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta (and also Mammata), it is this suggested sense or meaning that constitutes the soul of poetry (DL 1.1 and *Lochana* thereon). To grasp this subtle charm (*lavanya*) of poetry, the

experiencer must be endowed with *vimalapratibha* (undefiled intuition).

The cosmic dance (*natya*) of Shiva, like the given reality, is always present, but to be a part of it one needs to be endowed with a "vision" or liberate oneself at least partly from the binding principles (*ashuddha adbhvan*); that done, the rest of the task is to be left to the magnificent art of Shiva himself.

Literature and art in this system emerge as a valid means of knowledge. The literary experience is *alaukika* but not in the sense of *divine*. It is *alaukika* simply as a consequence of the inadequacy of categories, a consequence that has relevance for the equally inexplicable nature of the experience of Brahman as well. Hence, both share the same category. *Ananda* is the essential nature of Brahman, and this is the ultimate goal of all works of art and literature as well.

A theoretician who brings about a coherent synthesis of multiple discrete viewpoints is greatly valued in the Indian intellectual tradition. Differences, discreteness and individuation have never been ignored but these have not been the objectives of our thinkers because these have been self-evident. What the thinkers seek is synthesis to ensure the existence of a socially harmonious unity. Abhinava, like Bhartrihari and Shankaracharya, is a great synthesiser. His synthetic creative vision encompasses all the branches of the Trika system, and it is against this

¹⁹ *Mahabhava*, a technical term from the philosophy of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, is also relevant in the exposition of aesthetic experience, though, however, some technical/semantic liberties have been taken in using the term here.

theoretical background that he advances such brilliant expositions as his theories of *rasa* and *dhvani*.

Scholars have also commented on the disadvantages of Abhinavagupta's literary theory (Masson and Patwardhan xvi-xvii) which may be summarised as follows:

(1) A kind of reductionism operates through Abhinavagupta's poetics and aesthetics: he reduces literary experiences to a single *rasa*, the *shanta rasa*.

Exponent's view: The same charge can be levied against Bhavabhuti (*karuna rasa*) and Bhoja (*sringara rasa*) as well. In fact, there is no reductionism involved in this theoretical assumption. The mode of Indian thought is usually non-dualist. To strive for a common substratum does not mean denial of difference or multiplicity: instead, this is an effort to find a universal/deep structure where all such differences get contextualised. *Chitta* (the receptive self) is the abode of all the literary experience. To receive and enjoy the experience of art, the *chitta* has to stay in its calm and pristine form. Abhinava. holds that only knowledge emanating from *nirveda* (of the Universal Self) can bring about this necessary condition. We have already expounded the affinity of art and yoga.

(2) He himself is not a good poet and artist.

Exponent's view: The Classical opposition of philosophy and literature inspires this view, which if accepted, will provide no space to accept Panini, Dharamakirti or even Adi Shankara as poets in this paradigm for the simple

reason that they were primarily a grammarian, a logician and a philosopher respectively. The same logic debars Kalidasa's or Sriharsha's being regarded as great philosophers as well. It is also a refutation of a fundamental fact: that literature and philosophy (*darshan*/ "vision") are closely knitted together, but it is a refutation that posits a framework that has hardly any applicability in the Indian verbal discourses. Abhinavagupta's devotional compositions are not in any way inferior in literary merit in comparison to any other such compositions in world literature.

(3) He confuses art and life when he insists on the primacy of *shanta rasa*.

Exponent's view: This view is again an outcome of a belief in the duality of life and art. In Abhinavagupta's own practice at least we do not find any lack of synchronicity between the theory and its application. Art and life are not "yoked together by violence," and the highest goal of art is the highest goal of life also, i.e. *moksha*. He holds that where *pravritti* is the goal of all the eight *rasas*, *nivritti* is domain of *shanta rasa*.

Experience of any *rasa* is impossible unless the recipient is stable in his or her self only (ABH 6.15). Abhinavagupta does not confuse art with life; instead, he transcends the formal division of life and art, and in this way, expands not only the domain of life but also that of art.

(4) His religious bent of mind often becomes a hindrance in his literary exposition. He accords more importance to non-worldly experiences rather than

to those that are commonplace. In his view, *ananda* is greater than *pṛiti* and *vinoda*.

Exponent's view: The signified of the term *bhakti* cannot be religion as recorded here by the opponent. *Rati* and *bhakti* are essentially one in the Indian aesthetic paradigm. In fact, in dealing with literary experience, the Indian theorists do not recognise any distinction such as that between the worldly or the non-worldly – they are simply concerned with the experience of the self. The denial of *śhanta-rasa* and *bhakti* in life and art will only demean the concerns of life, and would invite, besides, Plato's serious objections to art and literature. Moreover, aesthetic theory strictly sets the qualification for the viewers: he/she need not belong to a particular community and culture to experience the literary/aesthetic content, but, on the contrary, he/she must give up all such distinctions to experience the work of art and its universality.

"Disadvantages," such as the ones enumerated above, are an immediate consequence of an incomplete comparative reading of him, as well as of ill-judged attempts at accommodating him in an alien cultural context. For this reason alone, this essay has eschewed a comparative methodology. The choice of the topic is not motivated by either any "Classical prejudice,"²⁰ though, unfortunately, this is the aura that

automatically attaches to any work relating to Indic studies. René Guénon makes a remarkable observation in this regard: "Indeed the study of the East as we know it today, if undertaken in a really direct way, would be of great assistance of all Antiquity" (34).

Moreover, as Professor Kapil Kapoor opines: "comparisons with the Western tradition of thought are best avoided because isolated comparisons make no sense and may even be misleading, and what we need to do is to compare the whole system and that needs a separate study. Such a study has to be preceded by a study of one system *per se*..." (1998: xii-xiii). In this study, since both the *purva-paksha* (the opponent) and the *uttara-paksha* (the exponent) come from the same cultural milieu, not much space is available for comparison. Some studies indeed have been made comparing and contrasting Coleridge and Abhinavagupta,²¹ and Croce and Abhinavagupta, but they have hardly established any enduring credibility in the domain of comparative study.

To study Abhinavagupta after a millennium is a greatly refreshing, enriching and rewarding experience. There are many more aspects to his creative faculties, and all of these need to be studied with a fresh outlook. We tend, often, to take a morphological approach in examining our great

²⁰ René Guénon, in the *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines* (1945), defines "Classical prejudice" as "essentially ... a predisposition to attribute the origin of all civilisation to the Greeks and Romans" (38).

²¹ See, for instance, Shrikrishna Mishra's *Coleridge and Abhinavagupta* (Darbhanga, published by the author, 1979).

thinkers, but such an approach would result in fragmenting the integrity of thought systems formulated by an integral theoretician like Abhinavagupta. A syntactic or discursal approach will, to my mind, be of absolute necessity in the study of not only Abhinavagupta, but the other important theoreticians in the Indian intellectual traditions.

While studying Abhinava just a millennium after his emergence in Kashyapamira (Kashmir) may be an Indian response to the "new millennium," more importantly, such studies as this also undertake to examine the sources, conditions and intellectual environments in which he developed as a philosopher, aesthetician and literary

theorist. The sharp contrasts, even the contradictions, between the Kashmir of today and the Kashmir (also known as Sharadadesha or Kashyapamira) that Acharya Abhinavagupta left exactly a millennium ago, and which he so fondly depicts in the last forty verses of the last chapter of *Tantraloka* (37.39-84), leaves one disheartened and depressed. The oblivion of such a brilliant thought system will ultimately be a terrible setback to the intellectual traditions of India. Would it be too ambitious to say here that studies like the present one may contribute towards creating the necessary conditions for *pratyabhijna* (recognition) of Kashmir's unparalleled glory?

// *tanme manah sivasankapamastu* //

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1. <i>Tattvaparakasha</i>	Bhojadeva	Kumaradeva	<i>Tatparyadipika</i>
2. <i>Tattvasringrabah</i>	Saddyojyoti	Aghorashiva	<i>Laghva-vivritti</i>
3. <i>Tattvatrayanirnaya</i>	Saddyojyoti	Aghorashiva	<i>Vritti</i>
4. <i>Ratnatraya</i>	Shrikanthasuri	Aghorashiva	<i>Ullekhini</i>
5. <i>Bhogakarika</i>	Saddyojyoti	Aghorashiva	<i>Vritti</i>
6. <i>Nadakarika</i>	Ramakantha	Aghorashiva	<i>Vyakhya</i>
7. <i>Mokshakarika</i>	Saddyojyoti	Ramakantha	<i>Vyakhya</i>
8. <i>Paramokshanirasa-karika</i>	Saddyojyoti	Ramakantha	<i>Vritti</i>

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APPENDIX 1: ABHINAVAGUPTA'S WORKS

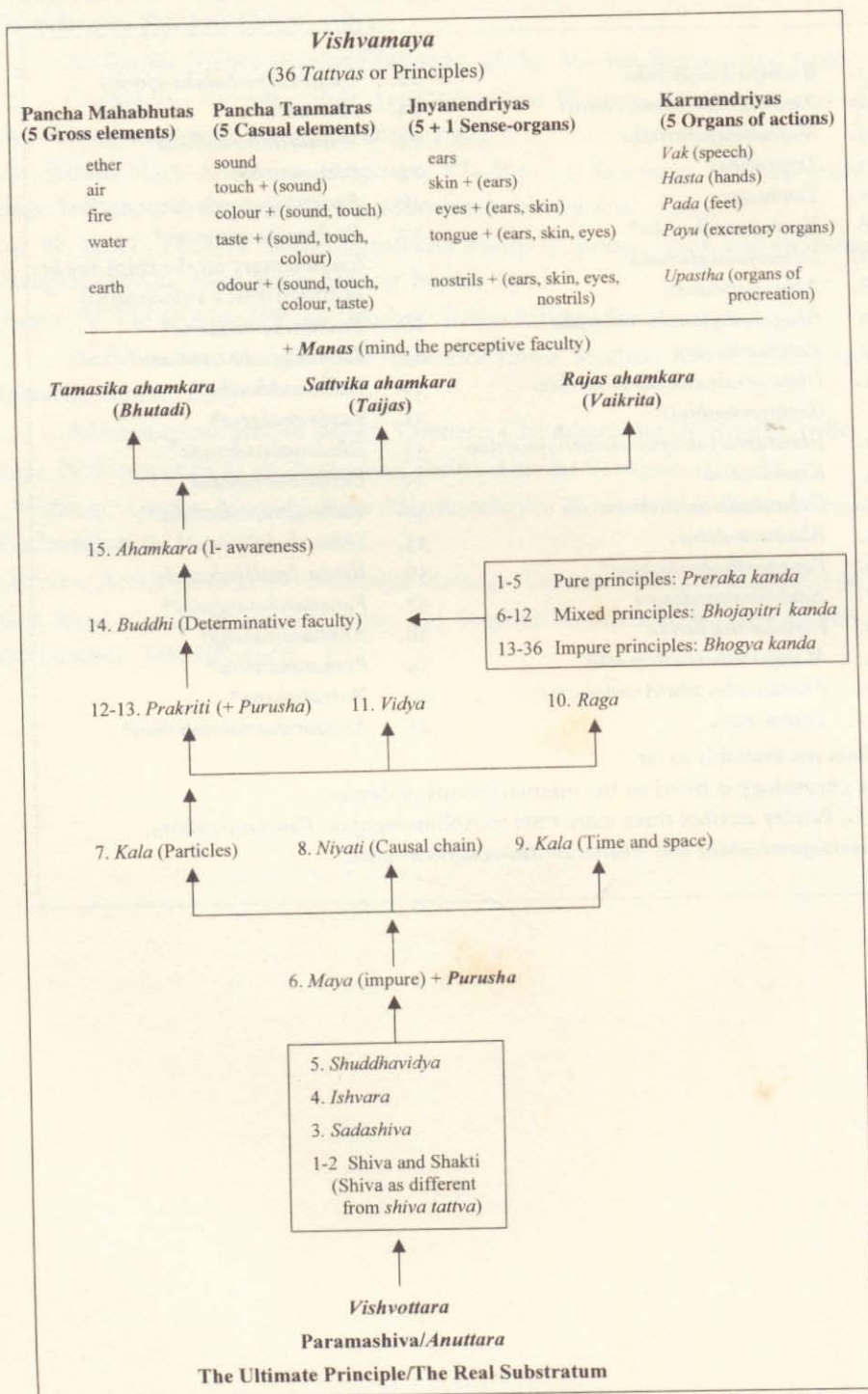
- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>Bodbapanchadashika</i> | 22. <i>Ghatakarparakulaka-vivritti</i> |
| 2. <i>Paratrishikavivarna/vivritti</i> | 23. <i>Kramakeli*</i> |
| 3. <i>Malinivijayavarttika</i> | 24. <i>Shivadrishya-lochana*</i> |
| 4. <i>Tantraloka</i> | 25. <i>Purvapanchika</i> |
| 5. <i>Tantrasara</i> | 26. <i>Padarthapravesha-nirnaya-tika*</i> |
| 6. <i>Tantravatadbanika*</i> | 27. <i>Prakirnaka-vivarana*</i> |
| 7. <i>Dhvanyalokalochna</i> | (commentary on the third <i>kanda</i> |
| 8. <i>Abhinavabharati</i> | of Bhartrihari's <i>Vakyapadiya</i>) |
| 9. <i>Bhagavad-gitartha-samgraha</i> | 28. <i>Prakarana-vivarana*</i> |
| 10. <i>Paramarthasara</i> | 29. <i>Kavyakautuka-vivarana*</i> |
| 11. <i>Ishtarapratyabhijna-vimarshini</i> | 30. <i>Kathamukhatika*</i> |
| (<i>laghvivimashini</i>) | 31. <i>Laghviprakriya*</i> |
| 12. <i>Ishtarapratyabhijna-vivritti-vimarshini</i> | 32. <i>Bhedavadavidarana*</i> |
| 13. <i>Krama-stotra</i> | 33. <i>Devistotravivarana</i> |
| 14. <i>Dehasthadevatachakra-stotra</i> | 34. <i>Tattvadbvaprakashika*</i> |
| 15. <i>Bhairava-stotra</i> | 35. <i>Shiva-shaktyavinabhava-stotra*</i> |
| 16. <i>Paramarthadvadashika*</i> | 36. <i>Bimba-pratibimbavada</i> |
| 17. <i>Anubhavanivedanam</i> | 37. <i>Paramarthasangraha*</i> |
| 18. <i>Paramarthacharcha</i> | 38. <i>Anuttarashtaka*</i> |
| 19. <i>Mahopadeshavimshay-tika</i> | 39. <i>Prakaranastotra*</i> |
| 20. <i>Anuttarasha-tika/Anuttarastia</i> | 40. <i>Natyalochna*</i> |
| 21. <i>Tantrocchaya</i> | 41. <i>Anuttaratattvavimarshini*</i> |

*Texts not available so far.

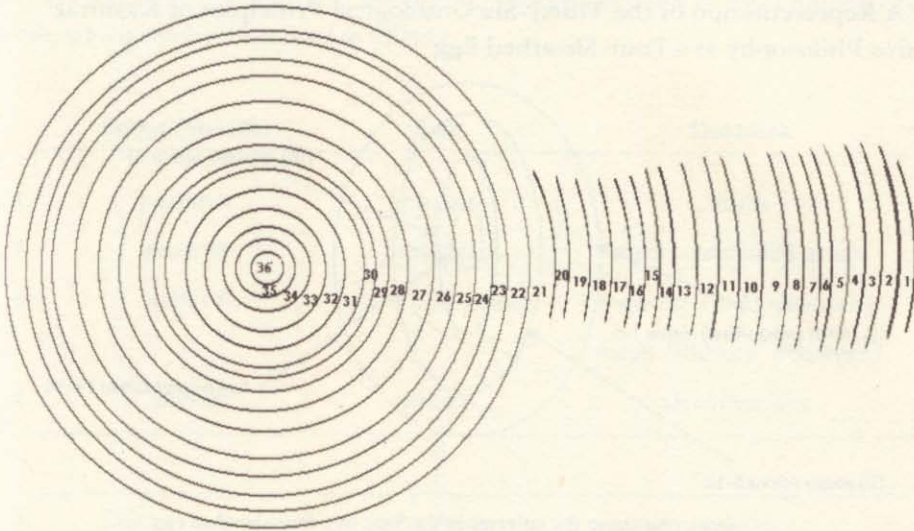
The chronology is based on the internal textual evidences.

K. C. Pandey ascribes three more texts to Abhinavagupta: *Pururava-vichara*, *Prayatnapanchashika* and *Anuttaratattva-vimarshini-vritti*.

APPENDIX 2: A REPRESENTATION OF THE SHAIVA ONTOLOGY



APPENDIX 3: THE THIRTY-SIX ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

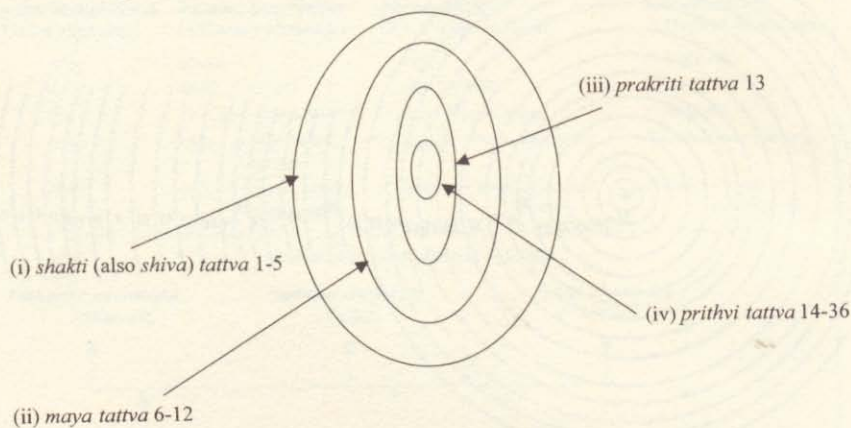


These thirty-six circles represent thirty-six ontological principles ranging from *shiva tattva* (1) to the earth (36). Groups of circles are related to one other and constitute a class. For instance, 36-32 is the group of five gross principles/elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. Likewise, circles 31-27 constitute another set, as do circles 26-22, circles 21-16 and 11-7, with the remaining ones constituting separate classes in themselves. The ordering is also significant here as it is a progression from the most subtle/all-pervasive (the first principle, *shiva tattva*) to the most gross/limited and compact (the last principle, earth). However, there is also a thirty-seventh principle, *Anuttara*, which is the sole substratum of all these thirty-six principles and "there is nothing beyond that."

In the Shaiva view, every creative process involves a the creation of *krama* (sequence) and *murti* (individuation, difference and multiplicity) out of the integral, non-sequential subtle mass. What we call creation is not expansion (that is, the state of *pralaya*, complete dissolution), but, contrary to common perception, an extreme and ultimate state of contraction of the Universal Self (Paramashiva). A literary or art composition is like the *earth*, the most gross (the thirty-sixth) principle – a compact mass of the absolute creative will (*shakti* or *vimarsha*). The reader approaches it when it is at that level, and it becomes his/her role to unfold, deconstruct and disseminate its multi-foliated conceptual structure. The creator's progression is from *shiva* to *prithvi* – expansion to contraction, while the reader's journey takes him from contraction to expansion.

APPENDIX 4

(A) A Representation of the Thirty-Six Ontological Principles of Kashmir Shaiva Philosophy as a Four-Sheathed Egg



Andacatushtaya: the universe in the form of a four-sheathed egg that consists of *shakti*, *maya*, *prakriti* and *prithvi*.

1. Shakti/Shiva contains everything within, and hence is known as *vishvamaya* and *vishvottirna*. Principles 1-5 constitute pure *adhva*/tattva/principles. *Ishvara* is the owner of this level. Shiva and Shakti are non-dual.
2. Duality and multiplicity are the characteristics of *maya* that manifest in the subsequent elements. The owner of this level is *Rudra* (also known as *Gabana*).
3. Consists of three qualities, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*; brings about pleasure and pain in beings. Vishnu is the owner of this sheath. Difference and individuality are the distinctive marks of this level.
4. The world: that which takes physical forms and whose owner is Brahma; fourteen kinds of world have been enumerated in the *Samkhya-karika* 53. It is important to note that the Shaiva philosophers have taken twenty-five principles (from *purusha* to *prithvi*) from the Samkhya system, investing these, however, with their own meaning and interpretation. [PAS, verses 4-5; TS, ch. 10; TL, ch. 11].

(B) A Representation of the Four Levels of Creation

There is another representation of the cosmic extension of Shiva in this philosophical system, which can be illustrated as follows:

	<i>Sarga</i> (Sheath)	<i>Kala</i>	Domains
1.	<i>parthiva</i>	<i>nivritti</i>	earth
2.	<i>prakrta</i>	<i>pratishtha</i>	water – primordial nature
3.	<i>mayiya</i>	<i>vidya</i> (<i>ashuddha</i>)	<i>purusha</i> (individual self) <i>maya</i> (illusory existence)
4.	<i>Shakta</i>	<i>shanta</i>	<i>shuddhavidya</i>
5.	<i>Shiva</i>	<i>shantatita</i>	<i>kalatita</i>

Shiva is beyond all binding principles like time and space. He permeates in all thirty-six ontological principles, and is illuminator of the cosmos which is identical with Him. He is also beyond all the four Sheaths enumerated above and at the same time contains all of them within His fold. He is all-pervasive. Since *shakti* cannot be separated from Shiva, the stage of *shantatita* includes both *shiva* and *shakti*. In the Kaula system, Anuttara or Paramashiva pervades all the thirty-six ontological principles and it is there *shakti* and *shiva* are included under *shantatita* or *kalatita* (beyond *shantakala* or beyond all the *kala*) (TS, ch. 10).

Abhinavagupta's Interpretation of Bharata's *Rasa-Sutra*: A Translation

Sudha Gopalakrishnan

EMOTIONS, BE THEY PERSONAL or shared, are externalised through a complex network of signs that are shared by a community. What is the nature of the emotions stirred up while reading a poem or watching a performance? Are they the projections of the mental perceptions of the reader/spectator, or are they objective impulses devoid of relevance to the protagonist? What is the exact nature of the representation undertaken by the actor performing the role of a character in a play? Indian philosophers over the ages have tried to analyse the nature of these feelings and to systemise them through their theoretical and ideological positions. Among such theories, the theory of *rasa* (roughly translated as aesthetic pleasure) propounded in Sanskrit is perhaps India's most significant contribution to the world of poetics. This theory, which originated in the work of Bharata (fourth century), underwent a rich internal development, and was subsequently refined by Bhatta Lollata and Sri Shankuka (eighth century), and by Bhatta Nayaka (tenth century) to reach its zenith in the work of Abhinavagupta (eleventh century).

Bharata's *Natyashastra* equates *rasa* with the ultimate joy derived out of the experience of poetry or drama. Depending on the communicability and range of this experience, Bharata divides *rasa* into eight varieties. Bharata's dictum *vibhavanubbhava-vyabbichari-samyogat rasa nishpattih* (*rasa* is manifested through the union of *vibhava*, *anubhava* and *vyabbicharibhava*) in the *Natyashastra* has led to several debates on the exact meaning of the terms *samyoga* and *nishpatti*. Theorists down the centuries have interpreted *rasasvada* according to their own views. Bhatta Lollata, the earliest theorist,

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representing the *rasotpatti* school, read the term *nishpatti* as *utpatti*, the generation of something that develops into *rasa*. Shankuka, who put forward the notion of *rasanumativada*, argued that *rasa* is mimesis, for the actor's representation appears to the spectator as real and this leads him to the experience. Later, Bhatta Nayaka, following the Samkhya doctrine, envisaged the experience of *rasa* as enjoyment (*bhoga*) and related the *guna* principle to the theory of *rasa*. While advocating the premise that *rasa* is the transcendence of the personal, he saw it as different from spiritual experience.

Abhinavagupta, discussing the nature of *rasa* refers, in the *Abhinavabharati*, his commentary on the *Natyashastra*, to other theorists, including Bhatta Nayaka. After critiquing the points put forward by his predecessors, he develops his own theory of *rasa*, anchored primarily in a Vedantic perspective. Abhinava's theory is spectator-oriented and idealistic, for he emphasises the power of the imagination, which helps the spectator scale heights of aesthetic delight during a performance. Sensitive spectators have impressions dormant in their own hearts, which are awakened while seeing similar situations in a play. However, these are not merely subjective feelings, for they shared and are in the nature of transcendence, which he terms *sadharanikarana*. Emphasising the transcendental (*alaukika*) nature of *rasa*, Abhinava says that it is basically an

inward experience in which the spectator suspends his personality to achieve – though temporarily – a higher state of being, akin to spiritual bliss. At the summit of this delight, it is as though a screen has lifted to reveal the region of bliss, which is *rasa*. Bharata's term *samyoga* is interpreted by Abhinavagupta to mean the relation between (1) the suggestor and the suggested, so far as the *bhavas* of the original character are concerned; (2) of the revealer and the revealed, so far as the *sthayibhavas* of the spectator are concerned. Abhinava's theory explains why even while depicting tragic situations during a performance, the ultimate experience is delight.

The present translation confines itself to the *rasa sutra* portion (the first chapter) of the *Abhinavabharati*,¹ Abhinava's commentary on the "*Rasa-sutra*," which appears in Chapter 6 of Bharata's *Natyashastra*. Important Sanskrit terms such as *rasa*, *bhava*, etc., have been retained, in most cases without a literal translation, for it is assumed that the translation addresses itself to a *sabridaya* or nuanced reader. However, to convey the essence of the *rasa sutra* to a wider readership, efforts have been made here to keep the language simple and direct.

Bharata's *Rasa-sutra*

After engaging in a debate on the earlier section, Bharata discusses the nature of

¹ The text is taken from Raniero Gnoli's adaptation of the *Rasa-sutra* (in which he has collated the manuscripts from the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras and the Ramakrishna Kavi edition of the *Abhinavabharati* (published by the Gaekwad Oriental Series) in *The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta* (2nd ed. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series, 1968).

rasa: "with the combination (*samyoga*) of *vibhava*, *anubhava* and *vyabhicharibhava*, *rasa* occurs (*nishpatti*)."

Bhatta Lollata's Interpretation

Earlier theorists like Bhatta Lollata have interpreted this stanza thus: *Rasa* evolves from the union of *sthayibhava* with other constituents like *vibhava*. That is, *vibhavas* act on the mental state in the form of *sthayibhavas*. It is presumed by Bharata that *anubhavas* do not arise from *rasa*. They cannot be considered the cause of *rasa* because they belong only to the realm of *bhavas*. As for *vyabhicharis*, while they are mental states, still they do not complement the *sthayi*, but remain in nascent/dormant state. Even in the example provided, some flavours exist in a dormant form, like the *sthayi*, and the others, like *vyabhicharis*, are nascent. That is to say, *rasa* is *sthayi* itself, sustained by *vibhavas*, *anubhavas*, etc. The unsustained state is *sthayi*. This condition may be ascribed both to the character represented and the representing person (actor).

This is the view held by ancient theorists. This is why Dandin in his *Principles of Alamkara* says, "with the combination of elements such as beauty, *rati* becomes *shringara*," and that "on reaching its summit, *kopa* is transformed to *raudra*."

Shankuka's Critique of Bhatta Lollata

Shankuka negates this view for the following reasons:

1. In the absence of *vibhavas*, *sthayi* cannot be known logistically.
2. Secondly (should this be so), Bharata

should have treated the issue of *bhavas* before *rasas*.

3. Thirdly, the statement and definition of *vibhavas* would have been pointless.
4. Then, each *rasa* would have had to be divided and sub-divided into infinitesimal categories like lowest, lower, low, high, higher, highest, etc. For example, *hasya rasa* would not be merely six varieties. *Kama* would not have been of ten, but countless varieties. *Shoka*, which is intense at the start, is seen to diminish with the passage of time. So too *krodha*, *utsaha* and *rati* become moderate through their transformation with the absence of *amarsha*, *sthairya* and *seva* respectively.

Therefore, in the re-creation of the *sthayibhava* of the represented character, in association with *vibhavas* (causes), *anubhavas* (effects), and *vyabhicharis* (complementary factors), and through the training and skill (of the actor), an artificial situation of make-believe is created. This is actually an imitation of the *sthayi* of the represented character, say Rama, and because of its imitative nature, it is called *rasa*.

Vibhavas and the like can be discerned through the power of the poem, while *anubhavas* can be seen in the actor's skill. *Vyabhicharis* can be gauged by the actor's power to recreate the experiences of the character. However, *sthayi* cannot be determined even by the power of the poem. "*Rati*," "*shoka*," etc., from their being mere words to their being expressed feelings (of *rati* and the like) are not as easily communicable as they are in *vachikabhinaya*. After all, *vachika* designates not the mere words,

but the effect they produce on the hearer. Similarly, *angika* does not simply consist of the movement of the limbs, but also depends on what these convey.

For example, in "*just like the badava fire devours a great ocean, similarly, anger consumes sorrow*" and "*when he is immobilised with grief, friends weep loudly to prompt him into expressing himself*," the grief cannot be expressed merely through the signified words, but through the sense they convey. Similar is the case with "*... while she painted, the drops of tears*" (in Harsha's *Ratnavali*), for the *rati* that Udayana feels is in the nature of happiness (*sukha*). This capacity to communicate is *abhinaya*, and it is different from mere verbal expression. This is the reason why Bharata does not mention "*sthai*" in the *sutra*, even though it is different in grammatical case. Therefore, *shringara* is the imitated version of *rati* produced through its influence and association. Even an error of judgement can produce causal responses. Here there is no feeling that the actor is happy, or that he himself is Rama. Nor does it seem that the man is not happy. There is, however, no perception either that he is Rama himself, or that he is like Rama. Here it seems that "it is that Rama who appears to be happy".

Shankuka says,

There is no doubt, no principle nor mistake, The mind accepts "it is that," and not "it is really that"

Contrary arguments cannot disprove a real experience that is clear, due to absence of error.

Abhinavagupta's Analysis of Shankuka's theory

My teacher says that this thesis is also baseless and refutable. Does *rasa* partake the nature of imitation

1. from the point of view of the audience?
2. from the perspective of the actor?
3. from the assessment of a discerning critic, for it is often stated that "this is the way it has been interpreted by scholars"? or,
4. from the words of the sage Bharata himself?

The first view is not correct, because imitation is possible only if there is a foundation. For example, the audience may mistakenly assume that milk is being drunk when the actor is in fact trying to communicate that wine is being drunk. If *rasa* is perceived through the actor's actions, does it also affect the spectator through the actor's imitation? His body, his ornaments, such as the crown, his expressions, and his actions, such as shivering, sobbing, hand, brow and eye movements, do not become reflections of the happy mental state through its imitation. Experienced through the senses, they are inert and of multiple manifestations, and are unlike real feelings. Primarily, it appears like imitation. In any case no one has experience of the *rati* of Rama, and so the actor taking the part of Rama cannot possibly imitate him. However, it might be argued that the imitation of the *rati* in the actor seems like *shringara*, but then what is its real nature? The mental states of the actor seem like real feelings

to the spectators due to their transformation through causes like the loving glances of women, *sahacharibhavas* like *dbriti*, etc. If this were so, *rati* would have been (the cause of) the actor's own feeling, and the argument that his acting is an imitation of *rati* would not have relevance! If it is argued that the *vibhavas*, etc., are present in the characters and not in the actors themselves, that may be true, but if the causes, effects and reasons do not belong to the actor, then they are artificial situations created by the strength of the poem, or the capacity of the actor, and are understood by the spectators as artificial. Again, if this is the case, how can they appreciate the feeling of *rati*? If it is argued that it is only an imitation, then only a dimwit can make such an argument. Anything different from the ordinary can be understood from similar phenomena only if a professional expert infers it. An amateur can see only the apparent cause. For example, only experts can infer the presence of a particular species of a scorpion judging from cow dung, but this does not prove the presence of another scorpion. Upon seeing mist, to assume that it is smoke is incorrect. And again, while a cloud of mist may give the false impression of its being smoke, but it certainly does not mean a bunch of red hibiscus flowers can be mistaken for fire through their similarity to fire.

The next argument is that the actor, while not in rage himself, appears to be angry. That is right, he does seem angry, but it is because of (gestures such as) the raising of the brows, which lead us to infer anger in the same manner as that

which leads us to judge an animal to be an ox upon looking at its facial appearance. The audience is not conscious of this similarity, but only of a shared perception between them and the actor. Therefore the argument that what happens on the stage is in the nature of imitation is not valid.

It is also not correct to assume that the audience feels that "it is Rama himself." This notion is/may be established as incorrect subsequently by another pervading impression, but then wouldn't that also be correct? If it is negated subsequently, why is it not a correct one? Even if there is no false impression, still the perception would be incorrect. Shankuka's theory that "an experience without a contradicting idea is true" is not correct. The premise that the actor is Rama himself is applicable to other actors also, and we can only look at this in its universal authority. The other argument, that *vibhavas* are discernible through the poem, is also not valid. The actor does not, for example, feel that he is in love with Sita in real life. If this statement means that this is what the audience is made to feel, then the answer (to this argument) is that there should be a more sound perception of *sthayibhava*. The impression of the spectators is that that "the man is in this (feeling)." *Abhinaya* has been theorised (by Shankuka) in a pedantic manner as words, verbal communication, etc., which will be dealt with later. To conclude, the premise that *rasa* is in the nature of imitation is wrong.

Again, the actor does not feel that he is imitating the mental activity of Rama himself. Imitation, or rather, the

replication of the activity of an unknown person, is impossible. If imitation happens post production, then this should apply in real life also. The argument that the actor does not really imitate a particular person, but only the sorrow of a great personage, is not true because there is no basis for this imitation. The sorrow expressed by the actor through tears, etc., is different from actual sorrow. The actor may feel that "I express the *anubhavas* of the great person," but in that case, *which* one? If it is *any* great person, it is beyond doubt that such a person cannot be conjured up without some firm idea. On the contrary, if the actor imitates a person who, say, cries like him, in that case, there is the mediation of his own personality, and the binary of imitated-imitator no longer exists. Then, the actor is not conscious of the fact that it is an imitation that he does (on the stage), for he performs on the basis of his proficiency, his memory of the *vibhavas*, and his heart's endorsement, born out of *sadharanikarana*. He displays the appropriate *vibhavas* and integrates the appropriate modality in his verbal rendition. He concentrates upon this alone and is not aware of any imitation. Of course, the imitation of Rama and the imitation of the apparel of his beloved are two different things.

It cannot also be said that the imitation is based upon natural facts, for what one is not aware of, one cannot imagine. Bharata never said anywhere that "*rasa* is in the form of an imitation of *sthayi*," even as an indirect statement. On the other hand, the categories of *lasya* dance, *tala* tempos and *dhruva*

songs indicate the opposite... Bharata's dictum "*saptadvipānukaranam*" can be interpreted differently, and even if it were imitation, how is it different from the imitation of the way the actor imitates the dress and conduct of the beloved?

Other Theories

Some people say that a (painted) cow may be identified by the colour and pigment of the painting, but then it is wrong to take "constitute" as apparent. We cannot presume that the paint represents a real cow, like that revealed by a lamp. It only creates a group of impressions similar to that of a cow. The application of the paint in a particular manner constitutes an aggregate impression similar to the limbs (and other organs) of a cow. As for *vibhavas*, the case is different, because, as said earlier, they cannot be like surmised as *rati*, etc. Therefore it is wrong to assert that *rasa* is the nature of imitation of *bhava*.

Then, others say that *rasa*, made up of pleasure and pain, is a blend of other elements, which are causes in the production of these feelings. This agrees with the doctrine of Samkhya. In this order of things, *vibhavas* are like petals, embellished by *anubhavas* and *vyabhicharins*. From this arrangement is born the *sthayi*, which are internal phenomena constituted by pleasure and pain. The advocates of this theory argue that statements such as "*sthayi* will lead to *rasa*" should be understood in a decorative sense, for they are aware that their thesis innately contradicts Bharata's. The student may be saved

from this unsound theory on account of its very apparent fallacy.

We will look at other theories in the light of this real and difficult problem.

Bhatta Nayaka's Theory

Bhatta Nayaka says, "*rasa* is neither sensed, nor produced, nor manifested. If the spectator feels it is part of him, then he would himself feel sad in *karuna*. Sita does not perform *vibhavas*, and the spectator is not reminded of his own beloved. The depiction of Gods (during the depiction of the crossing of the ocean, for example) does not logically lead to *sadharanikarana* in the spectator due to its lack of application in daily life. It is also impossible to conclude that the memory of Rama is generated, as the audience has no previous experience. If his presence is inferred through voice or implication, it cannot lead to *rasa* because there is no direct knowledge in the audience. As an example, the sight of two lovers together produces mixed feelings, and definitely it cannot lead to *rasa* in the spectator! If it is argued that *rasa* belongs to a third person, then the audience should be impersonal. Therefore, it cannot be said that *rasa* is perceived as direct experience or recollection. The theory of *rasa* as *produced* is also liable to the same error of judgement. If maintained that *rasa* exists in a nascent form to be manifested later, then the *vibhavas* should have highlighted it slowly. Nevertheless, the question of whether *rasa* exists in us or in another person persists. Therefore our theory is that *rasa* is revealed by the special power of words in poetry and drama through the operation of *bhavana*

(which is different from *abhidha*), and the action of *vibhavas* and so on in a state of *sadharanikarana*. This power is capable of suppressing the thick layer of delusion in our consciousness. In poetry, it negates flaws (*doshas*) and is characterised by perfection (*gunas*), and also by poetic embellishments (*alamkaras*). In drama, it is manifested by the four modes of *abhinaya*. *Rasa*, revealed by this power, different from direct experience, memory and the like, is relished and enjoyed by the integration of the three *gunas* (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*), and the states of flexibility (*druti*), extension (*vistara*) and development (*vikasa*). Characterised by the tranquility (*visbranti*) of one's own consciousness (*samvit*) and with the nascent state of *sattva*, and pervaded by bliss (*ananda*) and luminosity (*prakasha*), it is similar to the experience of the Ultimate Bliss (*brahmananda*).

This view, put forward by Bhatta Nayaka, is acceptable to us because we do not subscribe to Bhatta Lollata's theory. The faults Bhatta Nayaka points out (in the earlier theory) are legitimate.

Regarding enjoyment, we do not know of any that is not derived from perception. Even tasting is a perception and is named differently only because of the means employed for its origin. The same is applicable in direct perception (*darshana*), reasoning (*anumana*), revelation (*shruti*), analogy (*upamiti*), and intuition (*pratibhava*). Then if *rasa* is not produced or manifested, it will have to be either eternal or non-existent. There is no third possibility. The existence of something not perceived cannot be verified. Accordingly, Bhatta Nayaka's

followers may argue that *rasa* is about enjoyment through the states of *druti*, etc. Let us suppose so, but it is not possible that it exists only in these three states. In this case there can be as many states of enjoyment as there are varieties of *rasa*. Similarly *gunas* like *sattva* are also discernible in infinite ways predominating differently at different times. So it cannot be limited to three forms of enjoyment.

If the word "revelation" in the theory "*rasas* are revealed by the poem," is a matter of perception consisting of tasting and produced by *vibhavas* and so on, it may be accepted.

Bhatta Nayaka says that "*rasa* is the aim of poetry." It is an experience of relish and is not perceived through an ordinary state of consciousness (*parasamvitti*) revealed by the integration of *vibhavas*, etc. He regards *rasa* as manifestation. The word "experience" should also be understood in the real sense.

Now what is the real nature of *rasa*? What are we to understand?

What is the need to repeat the earlier thoughts and come to different conclusions? The obvious errors will doubtless be self-evident.

The human mind reaches higher and higher to perceive the truth. This may be enabled by the fruit of the earlier theories which have been the stepping stones to the truth. At the outset the crossing of the river of what can be known is difficult. But as we pursue with determination the truth, we may find bridges, cities and other such systems of support. An inheritance rich in thought may prove beneficial to

succeeding generations yielding a rich harvest. The theories of my predecessors are not contradicted here, but only modified and refined.

Abhinavagupta's Theory

Now let us examine the real nature of *rasa* in the context of the earlier theories. We are not saying anything new because everything has been stated by Bharata. He says *bhavas* are thus termed because they express the aim of poetry. To put it simply, therefore, *rasa* is the aim of poetry. After the literal perception of "they slept at night," "he sacrifices it into the fire," in a qualified person (*adhikarin*) there occurs a second perception through practical sense that eliminates the temporality of the earlier perception. The second perception transcends the literal sense and takes the form of "I will lay," "I will give," etc. This perception is called *bhavana*, *vidhi*, *niyoga*, etc. The same applies to poetry also, for a qualified person transcends the words of the poem through the power of intuition. On hearing the phrases *grivabhangabbhiramam*, *umapi nilalaka*, or *harastu kimcit*, after the perception of their literal sense, another manifest perception occurs that transcends the temporality of these phrases. The young deer, for example, is devoid of its specificity and the actor who performs the situation of fright shows an unreal situation. Consequently the fear that manifests is not circumscribed by the limitations of time and space. This perception is different from ordinary perception because it pervades fresh mental movements, consisting of pleasure and pain and

characterised by obstacles (*vighna*). The feeling of fear actually is a matter of direct perception, devoid of obstacles, which dances in front of our eyes. This is *bhayanaka rasa*. In this feeling, one's own self is not completely negated nor is it fully existent, and similar is the case with others also. The *sadharanikarana* is not circumscribed but extended, for example, like that of the connection between smoke and fire or between trembling and fear. Therefore, pitted against a real experience, this idea is nourished by the combination of actors and other such elements (such as time, space, subject, etc.) on the one side and the poem on the other side. These forces neutralise each other and disappear through the state of *sadharanikarana* and through the standardisation of the spectators' perception, *rasa* is nourished. The *vasanas* inherent in their minds, though different, are shared, and *rasa* is nourished in them. This uninterrupted form of consciousness is called *chamatkara*. The indications such as trembling (*kampa*), excitement (*pulaka*), shivering (*ullukasana*) are also *chamatkara*. For example "Vishnu is in a state of *chamatkara*. How then is it that Lakshmi's limbs, as beautiful the moon, have not been taken to pieces by Mandara mountain?" *Chamatkara* may be defined as submergent enjoyment that is un-satiated and un-interrupted. The word itself means the action relished through wondrous enjoyment and its vibration. It could be a form of mental perception through direct experience or imagination or memory but is manifested differently from the ordinary. Kalidasa has said "*ramyani*

vikshya." It is a form of perception that consists of relish. Since it is not pre-conditioned, this may become the object of relish. Therefore, it is neither a form of ordinary perception nor is it based on error, nor is it ineffable, nor is it ordinary, nor a superimposition. It may also lead to intensification transcending space, etc., or imitation, which is a result of the feelings. It may also be the combination of different elements from the perspective of the *vijnanavadins*. Whichever be the perspective, *rasa* is simply a mental state that is perceived without obstacles and characterised by relish.

The Obstacles in the Realisation of *Rasa*

The *vibhavas* remove the obstacles to *rasa*. In the ordinary world the words *chamatkara*, *nirvesha*, *rasana*, *asvadana*, *bhoga*, *samapatti*, *laya*, *vishranti* all indicate a consciousness devoid of obstacles. Here the obstacles include:

1. the lack of reality;
2. the subscription to temporality and spatiality;
3. the intervention of the personal in notions of pleasure;
4. error of perception;
5. lack of evidence;
6. lack of some apparent evidence; and
7. presence of doubt.

(1) If the situation appears lacking in reality, one's consciousness cannot be submerged and there is no rest. This is the first constraint. This can be overcome by the consent of the heart for ordinary events. For the portrayal of

extraordinary events, extraordinary personages like Rama who instill a belief in their pursuits should be chosen. Because of our deep-rooted faith and their unquestioned fame, they have enjoyed our trust since time immemorial. Therefore, a *nataka* which is directed towards acquiring learning and the dissemination of great principles should transcend ordinary events and deal with extraordinary events. For the dramatic form of farce (*prahasana*), this is not applicable. This matter will be dealt with later.

(2) One major constraint that ensues is that the spectator's own personality interferes with the tasting of pleasure, pain, etc. Because of the fear of excessive feelings, anxiety for their preservation, desire to experience other sensations, desire to avoid them, express them freely and hide them, other forms of consciousness may occur even if pleasure and pain seem to appear in another person, other feelings and forms of consciousness such as pleasure, pain, confusion, indifference and the like intervene as obstacles. One manner in which these obstacles can be removed is through the *natyadharma* mode of *abhinaya*, which is a representational method, for example, in the use of *kakshya*, *mandapa*, *rangapitha*, *lasya*, *bhasha*, dress and ornaments, etc., all of which conceal the real nature of things. However, the *purvaranga* and the *prastavana* of a play reveal this to the spectators. These conventions seek to negate the particular and eliminate the perception, so that in the performance there is a negation in the personality of the actor and the imposition of the

represented image of the character in the spectator's mind. As a result, both the real person and the represented character are negated during the play. Even dancers like Asinapathya and Puspagandika are not part of ordinary life though they may exist in some manner.

Thus Bharata has dealt with all the arguments for the production of *sadharanikarana*, which leads to the relish of *rasa*.

(3) Again how is it possible for one who is immersed in his own happiness to direct his mind to something else? To overcome this constraint, various means like vocal and instrumental music, theatre halls, skilled actresses and such other elements have been used. Through the operation of *sadharanikarana*, all spectators enjoy these elements. Such is their power that even an insensitive person is moved to become a *sahridaya*. It has been said that "poetry is visible or audible".

(4) The perception will not exist if the means of perception is absent.

(5) Even if there are statements and suppositions for a perception, the perception is not dependent on them because it is based on an evident perception based on direct experience. Vatsyayana has also said that "all valid knowledge depends on direct experience." Any inference and verbal testimony cannot disprove direct experience. For instance, when an imaginary circle of fire is created with the rotation of a burning stick, the knowledge is disproved only by a more powerful direct perception. So to remove these two obstacles there are four modes

of *abhinaya*, modes of *vritti*, *pravritti* and *lokadharmi*. *Abhinaya* is in any case different from inference and verbal testimony and more closely acquainted with direct perception.

(6) Is there anyone who believes in an inferior phenomenon? Such a person would always resort to basing his finding upon the more dominant theory. This is why *sthayi* can only be the object of tasting. The *vibhavas* and *anubhavas* are insentient and the *vyabhicharis*, while not insentient, are dependent on *sthayis*, but all are subordinate feelings. Some of the important *rasas* are directly related to *purusharthas*; for example, *kama* is akin to *dharma*, while *krodha* is conducive to *artha*, and directly leads to *dharma* and *artha*. *Utsaha* leads to all three. *Tattvajnana*, which leads to the shunning of worldly matters, leads to *moksha*. These are only the predominant feelings. Though they are not manifest together, the predominance of one naturally leads to the suppression of the other three. In any case, one of them is always prominent in a play at different times, so that they are always deemed to be present in the play. In fact, all of them may be present in a play, with varying emphases.

All these *rasas* are characterised by bliss of a uniform luminosity through its merging with our own consciousness, which leads to harmony. Even in real life, when women suffer a consistent feeling of sorrow, they find solace in their own minds because of the fact that this sorrow is animated by an uninterrupted solace, a rest without obstacles. Pain is simply the absence of solace. The disciples of Kapila in their

explanation of *rajas* say that wavering (*chanchalya*) is the soul of pain. All *rasas* therefore are characterised by harmony, though some with negative attributes are not without a trace of bitterness. This is true of *vira rasa*, because it is pervaded by the endurance of suffering.

Thus, *sringara* has a supreme position. *Hasya* is also important as it is accessible to all levels of spectators and appeals to them. This is also why it is said to belong to inferior people. A low-caste man laughs, grieves, despises and is easily impressed by even the weakest attempts at a smart observation. But then he also goes through the feeling of delight, and can be trained in the pursuit of the *purusharthas*. The division of drama into ten varieties is based on the position given to the *sthayis* in them. All this will be dealt with in detail later. *Sthayis* are ordered into nine varieties, and every creature is born with these nine forms of consciousness, following the principle that all beings "hate to be in pain and love to be happy," everyone loves to be in love, thinks he is superior to the rest, laughs at others, grieves at parting from his beloved, gets angry at the cause of such separation, is frightened when powerless, desires to overcome dangers, is repulsed at the sight of an ugly thing, wonders at extraordinary phenomena, and sometimes wants to renounce something. No living creature exists without these inherent feelings.

Sometimes, some aspects predominate over others, and the causes for this vary. Only some *rasas* are directed towards *purusharthas* and they are justifiably the objects for teaching.

The categorisation of people as great, etc., is dependent on the predominance of some of these elements above others. Some other feelings, such as weakness and apprehension, do not get expressed without the aid of the corresponding *vibhavas*, like a sage practising *rasayana* is immune from weakness and tiredness. Even those who have these feelings in them cease to do so when their reasons no longer exist. *Vira rasa* on the contrary does not remain latent even when the causes disappear, because other forms of heroism still exist. Patanjali says, "That Chaitra is in love with one woman does not mean that he does not love others." Thus, the *vyabbicharis* being tied up with *sthayis* get expressed in infinite ways, like beads of crystal, glass, emerald, topaz and gems of different colours attached to the same thread. Though set apart from each other and with places changed frequently these gems do not leave their colour on the thread, but they embellish the ornament and its design. Being different they reflect light and brightness at different times and are permanently connected with the thread. Similarly the *vyabbichari bhavas* are called *sancharis* or transitory feelings. If the *vyabbicharins* are termed weak, then one may ask why, because such a question indicates the unstable nature of this mental activity. In a statement like "Rama is heroic," no one questions the cause. The *vibhavas*, being limited, bring the *sthayi bhavas* to fruition by integrating their own nature into them. Even though the corresponding *vibhavas* are absent, the *sthayi bhavas* cannot be negated for these are *vasanas* inherent in all beings. However, the *vyabbicharis*,

when their corresponding *vibhavas* do not accompany them, are non-existent.

Bharata has discussed these aspects thoroughly through describing the *sthayis*, as "*sthayis* would lead to *rasas*." This statement indicates the definition of the general in relation to the particular objective.

(7) The *anubhavas*, *vibhavas* and *vyabbicharibhavas* in their separate existence have no definite relation to any *sthayi*; for example, tears may be the result of happiness or an eye disease. A tiger may evoke the feeling of anger or fear. Weariness or anxiety could accompany several *sthayis*, such as *utsaha*, *bhaya*, etc. However, in combination, these elements have specific significance. For example, if the death of a close relative is the *vibhava* of a situation, if the crying and shredding of tears is the *anubhava*, and anxiety and depression is the *vyabbichari*, the *sthayi* cannot be anything other than sorrow. Therefore, in case of doubt, to remove these obstacles, a combination of these elements is used.

The Nature of *Rasa*

Having said all this, *rasa* may be defined as that phenomenon in which the *vibhavas*, *anubhavas* and *vyabbicharis* get combined in a perfect manner through perfect union in the most concentrated manner, and may exist in either prominent or subordinate position, when the mind of the spectator becomes free of obstacles and reaches an extraordinary state of being fit for enjoyment. This *rasa* is different from *sthayi* because it is a state of enjoyment and has no objective existence, and

remains only as long as the enjoyment lasts and has no separate existence. The *vibhavas* (e.g., a garden, or loving glances, or the feeling of contentment) are transient to the level of universality because by themselves they are too real. Their function is to condition the consciousness of the spectator through *vibhavana* and *anubhavana*, etc. These are the known illusionistic aspects of *vibhavas* and are dependent on their previous causes through *vasanas*. The specific nature of the different *vibhavas* will be explained later. It is granted that while the spectator in his real life has a keen perception of other people's experiences, and that these condition his understanding of the *vibhavas*, etc. (but let us return to the discussion of *rasa*, which as mentioned earlier, is different from *sthayis*), *rasa* is not, as Shankuka said, simply a *sthayi* revealed by *vibhavas* made known through the objective of appreciation or relish. If it is that way, then why is *rasa* not experienced in everyday life? If an unreal thing is capable of being the objective of relish, a real thing has more reason to be so. It may be correct to say that the perception of *sthayi* consists in inference but *rasa* is certainly of this nature. This is why Bharata has not mentioned the word "*sthayi*" in the *sutra*. Had it been mentioned, confusion would have resulted. Statements such as "*sthayi* becomes *rasa*" are to be read in the proper context. To be precise, those considered the *vibhavas* related to a *sthayi* actually serve to enhance the enjoyment of a situation. How can *rasa* exist in the inference in the ordinary feeling? Therefore, the relish of *rasa*, which consists of an extraordinary level

of enjoyment, is different from memory, inference, and any ordinary state of being. A spectator who has latent traces of the ordinary inferential processes does not deal with a woman as if he were indifferent, but because of his sensitivity, through the consent of the heart, approaches her without the different steps of the memory, inference etc. This is to say, it is a matter of enjoyment, like the sprout of the relishing of *rasa*, that has the potential for fruition. This relish is neither a form of knowledge extended from the past as recollection or memory, nor any ordinary mode of perception, but happens by a combination of *vibhavas*, etc., of an extraordinary nature.

The experience of relish is entirely different from the mundane feelings (for example, love) caused by ordinary means of perception such as direct experience, inference, correlation and revelation, from the detached and impersonal insights of other people that is similar to the experience of yogis, from the uniformly dense (*ekaghana*) experience of immaculate bliss inhered by great *yogins*. These three categories of constraints are seen to create barriers, block evidence and impede the experience by depriving it of beauty (*saundarya*). Moreover, in the absence of mundane feelings, the presence of subjectivity (*svatmanupravesha*) or the absence of objective judgment, one's own *vasanas* are re-awakened through their corresponding *vibhavas*, etc., through the operation of *sadharanikarana*. Here there is no cause for the appearance of obstacles to the experience. This has been dealt with over and over again.

This proves that *vibhavas* are not the causes for the origin of *rasa*, because

otherwise *rasa* would have survived even without the evidence of their existence. They are not the basis of its perception because, had it been so, they would have been the grounds of its existence. *Rasa* in any case is not a perceptible, objective reality (*siddha*). Why, then, the phrase "*vibhavas* etc."? It is because they (the *vibhavas*) do not belong to the ordinary realm of reality, but serve to enhance the experience of relish (*charvana*). Does this happen elsewhere? Our reply is that it does not, and this proves its non-illusory quality. The case is similar to the sweet *panaka* juice, for after all, its taste does not subsume that of its ingredients like molasses and spices. It might be argued, however, that *rasa* is not knowable as a category, but this statement is absolutely true. Rather than being objectively known, it is to be understood through savouring. Then, how is Bharata justified when he speaks of "the creation of *rasa*" in his *sutra*? The creation does not refer to *rasa* but its tasting (*rasana*). The argument has clarity if the creation of *rasa* refers to that which is dependent on its relish (rather than itself). This relish is not due to the means of perception or action, but being devoid of reason, it is realised through one's own sensitivity. This relish is a mode of perception different from the ordinary, because the *vibhavas*, etc., are also of an extra-ordinary (*alaukika*) character. To

sum up, the union of *vibhavas*, etc., leads to relish, the basis of *rasa*, which is of an extraordinary nature.

The theory may be summarised thus: firstly, the actor is disguised by his costume, such as headgear and other ornaments. Secondly, even the power of the poem does not induce the actor to identify with the character (Rama, etc.) because the *vasanas* inherent in the audience do not permit this identification. The audience does not subscribe either to the time and space of the character in the poem, or to that of the actor. The expressions of excitement and so on (of the actor) that the spectator is familiar with in everyday life makes him experience them (in theatre) through the transcendence of time and space. Because he has these *vasanas* inherent in himself, the spectator is also an active participant. The *rati* he experiences is not impersonal. It is not subjective (specific) because then selfish motives would be involved. It is also not as if it is totally in the third person, for then it would directly occur in the spectator. Therefore, *shringara* is only *rati*, which is in a state of *sadharanikarana* and becomes the object of perceptible realisation (*gocharibhuta samvid*), having occurred either individually or in an evolving form. As for *sadharanikarana*, it happens through the operation of *vibhavas*, etc.

Abhinavagupta on Bharata's Theory of *Rasa*

Kapil Kapoor

ABHINAVAGUPTA IS AN EXTRAORDINARY philosopher, aesthetician and literary theorist, who, it could be said, had mastered all the learning in the tradition, crystallised its essence in his works, and left behind an influence that was to prove a touchstone to subsequent generations of thought. Abhinavagupta composed forty *granthas* pertaining to Shaivism, Tantra, *natya* and *sabitya*.¹ Three of his works – the *Bhagvadgitartha-sangraha*, *Ishvara-pratyabhijña-vimarshini*, and *Ishvara-pratyabhijña-vivritti-vimarshini* – deal with philosophy, and two – the *Dhvanyalokalochna* and the *Abhinavabharati* – with literature, *sabitya*, and the remaining, with Tantra. These two commentaries on literature, the *Abhinavabharati* (ABh, on the *Natyashastra*, NS) and *Lochna* (on the *Dhvanyaloka*, DL) are so necessary for an understanding of the original texts that they are treated as extensions of the original texts and are invariably mentioned along with them in the tradition. In his examinations of *sabitya*, Abhinava explains and clarifies many issues that Anandavardhana's theory of suggestion, *dhvani*,

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¹ Of these, the *Bodhapanchadashika*, *Paratrishika-vivarana*, *Malinivijayavartika*, *Tantraloka*, *Tantrasara*, *Tantratvatdhanika*, *Dhvanyaloka-lochna*, *Abhinavabharati*, *Bhagvad-gitartha-sangraha*, *Paramathasara*, *Ishvara-pratyabhijña-vimarshini*, *Ishvara-pratyabhijña-vivritti-vimarshini* are book-length studies. There are eight short compositions, of which four are *stotras* (hymnal texts): *Krama-stotra*, *Bhairava-stotra*, *Dehasthadevatachakra-stotra*, *Anubhavanivedana*, all in only fifty-nine *slokas*, while the remaining four – the *Anuttarastika-paramartha-dwadshika*, *Paramartha-charcha*, *Mahopadeshavinshatikram* – are composed in forty-nine *slokas*. Two texts – the *Tantrauchchaya* and the *Ghatakarparakulaka-vivritti* – may have been, in the opinion of some scholars, composed by someone other than Abhinavagupta. Thirteen works are no longer extant, but have been referred to by Abhinavagupta himself in his works. These are: *Kramakeli*, *Shivadrishtya-lochna*, *Purvapanchika*, *Padarthapravesha-nirnayatika*, *Prakirnaka-vivarna*, *Prakarana-vivarna*, *Kavyakautuka-vivarna*, *Kathamukhatilakam*, *Ladhviprakriya*, *Bhedavada-vivarna*, *Devistotra-vivarna*, *Tattvadhvaprakashika*, and *shivashaktyavinabhava-stotra*. Six of his works – *Bimbapritibimbavada*, *Anuttaratattva-vimarshini-vritti*, *Natya-lochna*, *Paramartha-sangraha*, and *Anuttarashataka* – have been referred to in comparatively recent enumerations.

raises, besides clarifying Bharata's *rasa-siddhanta*. In addition to this, Abhinava throws light on the issue of inter-dependence of object and image in any mental construct and in all artistic representation. What is particularly remarkable is that it has, since then, not been found possible to qualify or amend Abhinavagupta's constitution and explication of Bharata's *rasa*-theory, be it regarding the nature or the effect of the art-experience. He also extended the application of *rasa*-theory beyond *natya* to cover all *kavya* (literary compositions). Abhinava's method is dialectical, and the *Abhinavabharati*, like most classical Indian intellectual texts, is composed in the manner of a dialogue,² presenting three points of view:

1. that of Bharata, the original proponent of the *rasa* theory;
2. that of the pre-Abhinavagupta commentators like Shankuka, Bhatta Lollata and Bhatta Nayaka, an unnamed Samkhya thinker and unspecified "other scholars," and
3. that of the "*upadhyaya*," Abhinavagupta's teacher, and, finally, his own views.

The examination of his approach to any issue or topic reveals the following methodology. He:

1. quotes one or more of Bharata's *karikas*,

2. paraphrases the *karikas* to spell out the issues therein,
3. provides a statement of what the earlier thinkers or *purvacharyas* have understood of the *karika*, what they have said about it, and where and how he himself disagrees with them,
4. gives arguments in support of his disagreement, pointing out fallacies in the earlier positions, providing, alongside, further facts and reasons to buttress the validity of his position,
5. gives examples from known literary texts to illustrate his position,
6. gives further arguments, and,
7. states once again, by way of conclusion, his own position.

We will examine Abhinavagupta's exposition, in the *Abhinavabharati*, of Bharata's theory of *rasa* as it emerges in the *Natyashastra*, attempting thereby to understand the nature of *rasa* and the processes and determinants involved in its realisation, to arrive finally, via the consideration of the "problem" of the *shanta rasa*, at the question of the validity of *natya* as a discourse of valid knowledge alongside the other *shastras*.

I

In his commentary on the *rasa* chapter (ch. 6), of the *Natyashastra*, expounding the first expository *karika* (ka. 10), Abhinavagupta clarifies that Bharata's enumeration of the eleven elements of drama³ is, in fact, a re-statement of the

² For example, the *Abhinavabharati*, in just its exposition of the *Natyashastra*, refers significantly to the following texts: the Vedas, the Upanishads, *Vasavadatta*, *Shakuntala*, Samkhya, Yoga, Bhattatauta's *Sahridayadarpana*, Bhartrihari's *Vakyapadiya*, Abhinavagupta's *Bhagavadgita-vyakhya*, the *Abhidhanakosha*, the Mahabharata and the *Bhagavad-gita*. Abhinavagupta also examines extensively the ideas of three *purvacharyas*, Shankuka, Bhatta Lollata and Bhatta Nayaka, and establishes *sangati* among their ideas.

³ *Rasa, bhava, abhinaya, dharmi, vritti, pravritti, siddhi, svara, vadhya, gana and ranga* (NS 6.10).

earlier dramaturgist Kohala's view. In Bharata's view, strictly speaking, three kinds of enactment – of the body, of language, and of objects and songs and music (of instruments) – constitute the five parts of *natya*, drama.

Abhinavagupta is here drawing attention to the distinction that Bharata makes between drama as theatre and drama as a totality of composition that includes the reading experience. But Bharata in his exposition of dramaturgy accepts Kohala's view and follows the given order of elements and therefore begins his exposition by taking up first *rasa*, and, in *karika* 15, enumerating the eight *rasas*, namely, *shringara*, *bhasya*, *karuna*, *raudra*, *vira*, *bhayanaka*, *vibhatsa* and *adbhuta*.

In his explanatory comment on this *karika*, Abhinavagupta first defines the *rasa*-experience: the meaning/object perceptible through enactment by a *nata* (performer/action), illumined/constituted in plays (*nataka*) and poems (*kavya*), experienced through the non-distracted state of a one-pointed mind is called *natya*. This *natya*, though endlessly variable and different because of variable performers and endless *vibhavas* (causal, contextual factors), yet because it is experienced as existing in objects, in the performer/experiencer, in the narrative, and as all performers/experiencers merge in the primary performer/experiencer, the protagonist, this perceptible meaning/object is the form that the constituted self of the protagonist finally takes in the narrative, the *sthayibhavatmaka chittavritti svarupa*, the self-form of the durable state of being constituted in the protagonist.

And this state of being, the cognitive state of the protagonist,

- constituted by and achieving beauty through songs, dance and music, folk and other,
- reinforced by the literary excellence and influence of the tradition of enactment, freed from the particularity of self and other,
- getting generalised and including/ incorporating within itself the state of the viewers/participants (*samajika*),
- established as the unified cognitive state of the protagonist and the viewers/auditors, an extra-ordinary natural state,
- not the product of known epistemologies such as inference, verbal testimony or extra-ordinary perception,
- experienced as different from a worldly cognitive state and as beyond the known-knower structure,
- not appearing to be the product of its immediate substitution either,
- unable, unlike the worldly cognitive states, to produce further allied states,
- and graspable, therefore, as a process that is known as the tasting/ experiencing of uninterrupted deep peace (*visbranti*)

is referred to by the word *rasa*. So *rasa* is *natya* (meaning) and its experience is the fruit (of art). This is a very carefully worded statement about art-experience and needs to be meditated upon. In *natya* and in *kavya*, all the performers' different experiences, constituted by all the variable elements of enactment, merge to create an integrated state of being in the protagonist. The auditor recognises this state of being, experiences it through the process of

generalisation (*sadharanikarana*) that de-particularises the experience, frees this experience of the here and the now, and de-links it from the self and the other. Thus a state of being that is *shown to obtain* in the *nata* is cognised as an abstract experience by the auditor. The auditor's epistemology is not routine epistemology: it is neither inference, nor verbal testimony, nor extra-ordinary perception. This experience being "present" only to the self of the auditor (*sakshatkaratmaka*), it is essentially non-perceptible. It evolves in the consciousness of the auditor, and finally, one dominant *rasa*, one unified aesthetic experience, results from innumerable causal factors. [Abhinavagupta compares this primary *rasa* (*maharasa*) with Bhartrihari's *spota*:⁴ just as the sequential, segmented and hierarchical linguistic elements – sounds, bases, affixes and words – are grasped as an integrated, undifferentiated entity of meaning, *rasa* too, varied and born of diverse sources and expressed in so many expressers, is a single integrated *rasa* and the other subordinate *rasas* have the same status as the parts (*avyaya*) of a sentence or utterance. The two competing theories of sentence comprehension, Kumarila Bhatta's *Abhibitanvayavada* and Prabhakara Mishra's *Anvitabhidhanavada*, are also cited to show that all the subsidiary *rasas* together constitute the one primary experience, even though the auditors remain aware of their separate

identities.⁵ This primary *rasa*, *maharasa*, is, as *spota*, what is grasped and comprehended, and the subsidiary *rasas* are rendered unreal in themselves. Alternatively, this *maharasa* is instrumental (*upayatmaka*) in manifesting the subsidiary *rasas*. Or, yet again, this *maharasa* is a collective *rasa* (*samudayatamaka*), an assimilation of all the subsidiary *rasas*. For Abhinavagupta, all three theories are acceptable explanations of the relationship between the dominant aesthetic experience and the subsidiary experiences. Bhartrihari's concept of parts constituting a whole, and possessing identity only in terms of the whole is thus evoked by Abhinavagupta to assert the integrated nature of the aesthetic experience.

All the *rasas*, primary and subsidiary, are the "meaning" of a *kavya* (literary composition). These *rasas*, as enumerated by Bharata, are nine or eight in number, depending on whether *shanta rasa* is accepted as a *rasa* or not. The question that now follows is: why has Bharata enumerated the *rasas* in the order given? What is the basis of this sequence: Why does the enumeration begin with *shringara*? The explanation is that, because its *bhava*, the causal factor, *rati*, desire or attraction, is a universal human experience: *shringara* is universally present in all beings, is known to everyone and gives pleasure to all. *Hasya*, joy/laughter, follows *shringara* in life also, and comes next in the enumeration. Its exact opposite,

⁴ See the *Vakyapadiya*, kanda I, ka. 44-126.

⁵ To take Bhartrihari's illustration: in the number "123," we remain aware of 1, 2 and 3 separately, yet "123" has an integrated denotation that transcends their individual denotations. Modern *Gestalt* theory has affinities with this postulate.

karuna, marked by despair, is listed next. *Raudra* in its source resembles *karuna* – both involve some cause for grief – and is thus listed next. These four *rasas* relate to *kama* and *artha* (two of the four *purusharthas*, or goals, or ends of life; *kama* and *artha* are also the two that human beings do not have to be persuaded into seeking or taught to strive for, as they are almost natural impulses). *Vira* is listed next as it concerns *dharma*, righteousness – it is manifest in the brave who protect those stricken by fear, the oppressed. And as it involves fear, *bhaya*, *bhayanaka* is listed as the sixth *rasa*.⁶ As the *vibhavas* of *bhayanaka* are also productive of *vibhatsa*, *vibhatsa* is listed next. *Vira*, which concerns both *bhayanaka* and *vibhatsa* – involving as all the three do, *bhaya* – produces the effect of wonder or admiration, *adbhuta*, and is listed as the last *rasa*.

[*Natya*, thus, is *trivargatamaka*, that is, instrumental in the promotion of *artha* (material well-being) *kama* (worldly desires) and *dharma* (righteousness). These *purusharthas* fall under the *pravritti-marga*,⁷ the path of

involvement or engagement with the world. Abhinavagupta completes the argument by stating that the addition of a ninth *rasa*, *shanta rasa*, is necessary in that it would represent the *nivritti-marga*, the path of freedom from involvement with the world, the path that promotes the fourth end of life, *moksha* (liberation from the here and the now), an end of life that no other *rasa* promotes. The *shanta rasa* is experienced when one is stabilised in one's self.

Bharata, after enumerating the eight *rasas*, lists (in ka. 16 and 17) the eight *sthayibhavas* (relatively more durable states) that evoke the *rasas*. Abhinava explains that the performer (*nata*) cannot enact the effects of *vibhavas*, *anubhavas* and *sattvikabhavas* without knowledge of the experiential states (*chittavrittis*) such as *rati*, etc., that Bharata designates as *sthayibhavas*. *Sthayibhavas* are to be evoked through the enactment of physical conditions (*anubhava*, *sattvikabhava*), and body positions and postures, and through language (*angika* and *vachika abhinaya*). Therefore, the artist, the *nata*, must know what state he is to evoke, its nature and its substance.

⁶ So *bhaya*, fear, is generative of both "terror" and "valour" though in different ways. Such inter-relationships between *rasas* are taken up below for a separate discussion.

⁷ *Shruti* and *Smriti* texts talk of three paths or attitudes to life: *pravritti*, involvement or participation; *nivritti*, withdrawal or abstinence, and *udasinata*, detachment or indifference (to what one gets and what one loses). The eight *rasas* promote the three ends, *kama* (worldly desires), *artha* (material goals) and *dharma* (righteousness) in that order. Art, therefore, is of this world. Rajashekhara in the "*Kavyapurushot-patti*" (Origin of *Kavya*) chapter of his eighth-century text, *Kavyamimamsa* narrates how, when Sarasvati proceeded to leave the earth for Brahmaloka, she was followed by her *Kavya-purusha*, but she told him, "Son, without Brahma's desire you should not go the Brahma-loka." Thereupon, he turned back. This is a narrative in the legendary-symbolic mode, where *Kavya-purusha*, the son of the goddess of wisdom and learning, stands for the domain of literary discourse, Brahma-loka symbolises the discourse of metaphysical concerns, and Sarasvati's insistence on *Kavya-purusha*'s remaining on earth is a pointer to the *laukika* (this-worldly) nature of literary discourse. Literary discourse is, thus, worldly and marked off from philosophical discourse and its metaphysical concerns.

Therefore, says Abhinavagupta, Bharata enumerates the eight *sthayibhavas* immediately after the *rasas*.

[But then, what is the *sthayibhava* for the ninth *rasa*, the *shanta rasa*? Four views are quoted:

1. re-reading "*vismayaca-iti*" (ka. 16-17) as "*vismayaama-ca-iti*," some thinkers posit *shama*, control of senses (*indriya nigraha*), as the *sthayibhava* for *shanta rasa*;
2. others argue that *utsaha*, the *sthayi* of *vira*, is also the *sthayi* of *shanta rasa* as without enthusiasm no one can seek the ultimate end of life – *moksha*;
3. others argue that *jugupsa*, the *sthayibhava* of *vibhatsa* is the *sthayi* of *shanta rasa* as well, for only disgust with the material world leads to renunciation, which in turn produces *shanta rasa*;
4. still others argue that all the three – *shama*, *utsaha* and *jugupsa* are the *sthayibhavas* for *shanta rasa*.

But Abhinavagupta takes the position that *vairajna*, indifference towards worldly objects born of proper knowledge (*tattvajnana*), is the *sthayibhava* that results in the state of deep peace in the self. So *nirveda*, the first of the *sancharibhavas* in Bharata's enumeration, is the *sthayibhava* for *shanta rasa*. □

This raises two questions: firstly, why has *nirveda* not been counted among the *sthayibhavas*, and secondly, can a *sancharibhava* function as a *sthayibhava*? The response to the first question is two-fold: *shanta rasa* is a *rasa* in *kavya* but cannot be a *rasa* in *natya* for its *sthayibhava*, *shama*, actionlessness of all

the five senses, cannot be represented in *natya*, which is an enactment, a performance, according to Dhanika, the commentator of the *Dasarupaka*. So *shama* is not counted as a *sthayi*. Secondly, *nirveda* being *amangal* (not auspicious), it is not given the status of a relatively durable state; however, as it has the potential to be a *sthayibhava*, it is listed first in the enumeration of *sancharibhavas* (NS ka. 18-21). That a *sanchari* can become *sthayi* is allowed by Bharata: as Abhinavagupta takes care to point out, the *sthayibhavas* have not been enumerated, i.e., their count or number has not been fixed unlike in the case of the *sancharibhavas*, whose number Bharata establishes. So a *sancharibhava* like *nirveda* has the *dharma*, or the properties, of both the *sthayibhava* and the *sancharibhava*.

As the *sattvikabhavas* combine in themselves the property of both the *sancharibhavas* and *abhinaya*, in that they may function as auxiliary states and are also expressive elements (elements of enactment), it is the *sattvikabhavas* that are enumerated next by Bharata (NS ka. 22). Although they share the potential of *sancharibhavas*, they have been listed separately because as involuntary physical responses to experiences, they are essentially elements of *abhinaya*, enactment.

Karika 23 lists the four types of enactment (*abhinaya*) – *angika* (of body and limbs, of movement and postures), *vachika* (language and words in dialogue, in songs and in the background), *aharya* (objects, dress, etc., and ornamentation) and *sattvikabhava* (manifest involuntary physical responses to experiences). These

elements of the art of enactment are very familiar in ordinary life and, therefore, taken for granted, but they are the very essence of drama as they make for the difference between life and drama – what happens in life is *enacted* in drama. The difference between life and art is *abhinaya*. So after *rasa* and *bhava*, the two objects of enactment, the experience as it is encountered in life and the elements of *abhinaya*, or the means or instruments of enactment, are listed.

Abhinaya, enactment, is, as the *abhinaya karika* (23) notes, of two kinds: (1) as in life (*lokadharmi*), and (2) specific to drama or/and stylised (*natyadharmi*). Bharata follows up the *abhinaya karika* with a prose statement about the two kinds of enactment. When a man plays a male role, or even when a young actor enacts the role of an old man, and when dramatic time and dramatic space are analogous to that of the event in real life, the enactment falls in the rubric of the *lokadharmi*. And if a girl plays the role of Krishna, or if the enactment is stylised, as in dance-dramas, or symbolic, as in Kathakali, the *abhinaya* is termed *natyadharmi*. A further distinction is also to be made: if the enactment follows the modes and manners of ordinary life, it is *lokadharmi*; on the other hand, if the performance follows the conventions of drama or certain *shastraic* conceptions of characters and events, it is *natyadharmi*.

Bharata next sets out (ka. 25) the fifth element of *natya* – *vritti*, style (of language and words). Four *vrittis* are listed – *bharati*, *sattavati*, *kaishiki*, and

arbhatti – and choice can be exercised between these depending upon which style is most appropriate to the story, theme and character of the enactment: e.g., a play dealing with heroism and with a heroic protagonist will employ *sattavati vritti*; similarly, for the enactment of *raudra* and *vibhatsa*, *arbhatti vritti* is employed; for *sringara*, *kaishiki* style is appropriate, and for the rest, *karuna*, etc., *bharati vritti* is best. It is to be noted that these are not arbitrary conventions. Language and style naturally change in accordance with subject and attitude. *Bharati*, *sattavati*, *kaishiki*, and *arbhatti* are but names given to the different kinds of style that people observably use in life. One recognises that it would be inappropriate to speak in heroic style in a sad moment. For every occasion, there is a suitable way of narrating and speaking, and these “occasions” and their corresponding “modes” have been systematised in this four-fold classification of styles.⁸

What is of interest is how Abhinava explains the link between *abhinaya* (enactment) and *vritti* (style). These *vrittis* belong to different kinds of plays and the *nata*, the performer, has to be familiar with them. The *nata* can enact only when he knows what he is to enact and these *vrittis* concretise what is to be enacted and how (*abhinetya*). Abhinava also points out that these *vrittis* are also broadly regional: e.g., *kaishiki vritti*, essentially emotional and soft, is more characteristic of the compositions of *prachya*, the north-east, and this holds

⁸ Naturally, each style has its features and these have been described by poeticians such as Vamana and Dandin, among others.

true even to this day of Bangla, Oriya and Assamese literatures.

Next, *pravrittis*, styles of dress, ornaments and music, are listed in *karika* 25, which mentions five kinds: *avanti*, *dakshinaya*, *auramagadh*, *panchali*, and *madhyama*. These are more obviously regional, and correspond broadly to western, southern, eastern, northern and central India respectively. These five regions and regional styles are still distinguishable if one were to replace these broad appellations with the names of five modern-day Indian cities: for example, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Amritsar and Indore. Thus, the same play will have different regional articulations as theatre, and this holds for dance forms as well.

All this *abhinaya*, performance, Bharata says (ka. 27) ends in two kinds of *siddhi*, accomplishment or success: human or ordinary and godly or extraordinary. Abhinava does not add any explanatory comment, which means that Bharata's own explanation (NS, ch. 27) of the two kinds of success is adequate. *Karikas* 2-14 describe the markers of the normal success of performance, and *karikas* 16 and 17 describe the extraordinary success of a performance. The first kind of success, "human" or *manushi* success, is evident through normal, appropriate audience responses to the different kinds of *rasa* evoked. These are of two kinds: *vanmayi siddhi*, response in speech or through the medium of language, and *shariri siddhi*, response through the medium of the body. *Vanmayi siddhi* is received when the audience appropriately expresses, through expletives and exclamations,

approval, disapproval, wonder admiration or sorrow, etc. And *shariri* proof of successful enactment is obtained when in enthusiasm the members of the audience stand up from their seats and applaud or give gifts to the performers. And if, when the performance is marked by the evocation of intense, *sattvika* (ennobling) *bhavas*, or states, the whole theatre overflowing with spectators watches the performance in entranced silence and immobility, then the performance is evidently an extraordinary success.

Statements about music and song come next, as these two are integral to enactment. In the prose text that follows *karika* 26, the seven musical notes are listed and in *karikas* 27, 28 and 29, the music produced by different instruments is described. *Karika* 30 describes the songs used in enactments, with their different functions, while *karika* 31 speaks about the three kinds of theatre.

The musical notes, Abhinavagupta points out, are of course present in the instrumental and vocal music and in songs. But as music by itself adds to the beauty of performance, as, e.g., in *antaralapa*, music that separates one scene from the other, the seven notes have been read out separately – *nishada*, *rishabha*, *gandhara*, *madhyama*, *panchama*, *dhaivata* and *shadja*. These are of two kinds – produced from the throat or with the breath (from wind instruments such as the flute). Then, four kinds of instruments played by hand are listed – stringed (*vina*), percussion (*mridanga*, *dhholaka*), solid metal (to be struck) such

as bells, and those with holes (flute).⁹ *Karika* 30 lists five kinds of *gana*, song. Abhinavagupta explains their functions: that which accompanies the entrance of a character and portrays his condition and his character is called *pravesaka gana*; that which communicates the inner state of a character who is already on the stage is called *prasada gana*; that which marks the intervention of a different *rasa* in the main narrative-*rasa* is called *akshepa gana*; that which accompanies special movements of the stage is called *antaramana gana*, while the *nishkramaka gana* accompanies the exit of a character. These five kinds of *gana*, explains Abhinavagupta, communicate to the auditors the cognitive state (*chittavritti*) of the characters. These songs also have a given configuration of words with the initial parts recurring, which serves to demarcate them from any other kinds of music, including songs, in the performance.

Appropriately, the eleventh element of drama, *ranga*, the theatre house, is the last to find mention (ka. 31), when all the other ten elements have been realised and can now be enclosed inside the theatre-house. Three kinds of theatre houses are listed – square, rectangular and triangular. A proper theatre house with its stage and divisions facilitates the movement of actors, acting/enactment, singing and music. The words of the actors, particularly those that are deliberately articulated in low volume, will be lost in too large a theatre house. Similarly, instrumental music will lose its gravity in a windy theatre house.

Abhinava notes that Bharata closes this section with the declaration that he has examined the eleven elements of drama with regard to their subject-matter (*uddesha*) and that hereafter he will study each element for its analytical content (*vibhaga*). Bharata thus divides his study of the elements of drama into two parts – *uddesha* (ka. 15-30) and *vibhaga* (ka. 32 onwards), and further analysis, in the *karikas* to follow, would be carried out with the help of the tools of *lakshana* (markers), *bhashya* (explanatory commentary) and *pariksha* (*akshepa-samadhana*, classification of objections or counter-views, also called *nirukta*).

II

"I shall examine each element now," promises Bharata, and proceeds to say that he will explain *rasa* first: "first of all we shall explain the *rasas*. Without *rasa*, no meaning gets constituted. By the conjunction of *vibhava*, *anubhava* and *sancharibhava*, *rasa* becomes available/ready to be experienced" (NS 6.32). The tradition, including Abhinavagupta, has reflected a great deal upon the question of the nature of *rasa* and how it gets constituted.

As Abhinavagupta notes explicitly a little later in the discussion, *sthayibhavas* are not mentioned in the *rasa-sutra*. This raises the question about the nature and status of *sthayibhavas*: how are they different from the three *bhavas* mentioned in the *rasa-sutra* and how are they related to *rasa*? This question is

⁹ Chapters 28-33 of the *Natyashastra* are devoted to music, song and prosody

pertinent because after analysing *rasa* in Chapter 6, Bharata, in the seventh chapter, separates the *sthayibhava* (7.8) from other *bhavas* and describes it as *the object of enactment* (7.7),¹⁰ a description that Abhinavagupta gives prominence to in reiterating that the *sthayibhava* is not enacted, but is the object of enactment, *abhidheya* (ABh on ka. 37). Bharata notes (7.3) that *bhavas* are those elements that bring about the state of *rasa*, and they are of three kinds – eight *sthai*, thirty-three *sanchari* and eight *sattvika*. The conjunction of properties of these forty-nine facilitates the realisation of *rasa*. Then, there are, besides, what are specifically called *vibhava* and *anubhava*. The term *vi-bhava*, with the pre-fix *vi*, is used for special knowledge (*vishishta jnana*) – *karana* (cause), *nimitta* (means), and *hetu* (illustrating medium¹¹) are its synonyms. That in terms of which the meaning of verbal, bodily and involuntary enactments (*abhinaya*) are grasped or known is called *vibhava*. Thus, it is in terms of the *vibhava* that the words, actions and involuntary responses make sense to, and are cognised by the auditors (NS 7.4). *Anubhava* are thus called because they are the manifest reflexes of *vibhava* and enable the auditors to grasp the inner condition that provides the impulse for such physical action (NS 7.5). It is *anubhava* that are enacted along with *sattvikabhava*.

Among the five *bhavas*, the *sthayibhava* is different and primary because “this is the *karanabhava* (causal *bhava*) of the *rasa* (final effect or core) of the experience that touches one’s heart and spreads through the body as fire spreads in dry wood” (NS 7.7). It is the *sthayibhava* that in conjunction with other elements facilitates the experience of *rasa*. It may legitimately be asked why *sthayibhava* alone has that property and not *vibhava*, *anubhava* or *sanchari*. It is urged that all human beings have in common the same bodily features, yet some of them become supreme or pre-eminent by virtue of their family, conduct, knowledge, actions or some other extraordinary endowment, while others, on account of their lower mental calibre, rest content with serving them; in the same way *vibhava*, *anubhava*, and *sancharibhava* are dependent on the *sthayibhava*, that is, as Abhinavagupta notes, the *sthayibhava* is the *abhidheya*, object of representation, and all the others flow from it. This is explained with an analogy:

Just as the king among ordinary people and the teacher among learners are primary, in the same way the *sthayibhava* is the primary *bhava* among *bhavas*. (NS 7.8)

Thus, though the *sthayibhava* is not mentioned in the *rasa-sutra*, it is the *sthayibhava* that evokes *rasa*, and *rasa* is mentioned, and *rasa* results from the

¹⁰ The *rasa* theory is built around the concept of *bhava*. *Bhava* is that which brings about a condition which gets established (through what happens). *Bhava* is defined in *Amarakosha* as “*vikaro manasa*.” Thus, *bhava* means a change in the native state of *mana* (mind). *Amarakosha* lists (3.2.15) thirteen synonyms of *bhava*. For more details, see Kapil Kapoor and Nalini M. Ratnam, *Literary Theory: Indian Conceptual Framework* (Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press, 1998): 105-106.

¹¹ Such as lightening: in its flash, objects are revealed.

enactment (*abhinaya*) of *vibhava*, *anubhava*, *sancharibhava* and *sattvika-bhava*, all of which have as the object of their representation the *sthayibhava*. Cognition of the *sthayibhava* spreads though the whole being of the auditor, who then relishes the *rasa* of that experience.

What is the relationship between *sthayibhava* and *rasa*, that is, say, between *rati* and *shringara*? Does the *bhava* itself transform into the *rasa*? Or is the *rasa* evoked by the *bhava*? Or is the *rasa* a manifestation of the internally existing *bhavas* triggered by the *sthayibhava*? How, then, do we define *rasa*, how do we define the aesthetic experience?

Abhinavagupta examines four previous positions that have been taken in the tradition.

The first is that of Bhatta Lollata, who explains that, combined with/intensified/reinforced by *vibhava*, etc., the *sthayibhava* itself becomes *rasa*. Unaccompanied/un-intensified/not reinforced, it remains just a *sthayabhava*. This is the difference between *rasa* and *sthayibhava*. Abhinavagupta points out that other earlier *acharyas* such as Dandin also subscribe to this view. Dandin says that *rati* intensified becomes *shringara* and *krodh* intensified becomes *raudra* (*Kavyadarsha* 2.281 and 2.283).

Shankuka rejects Lollata's view that the *sthayibhava* itself is the *rasa*, and Abhinavagupta cites eight of Shankuka's arguments to this effect (see ABh on ka. 31):

1. Only when it is in conjunction with *vibhava*, etc., does a *sthayibhava*

become perceptible, but Lollata says that what becomes perceptible is *rasa*, in which case the *sthayibhava* pre-exists the conjunction (of *vibhava*, etc.);

2. In that case, again all the *bhavas* have to be construed as objects of representation (*abhidheya*), not as representers, and as their knowledge is knowledge of the non-present, they cannot be experienced unless we accept that they, along with *rasa*, also pre-exist, in which case
3. No conjunction or process is required for *rasa*-realisation, as *rasa* pre-exists if it is no different from *sthayibhava*.
4. And if the *sthayibhavas*, *rati* etc., are also to be accepted as *rasas*, then corresponding to the variability of the *sthayibhava* – and *sthayibhavas* vary according to the *trigunatmaka prakriti* of the constituents of *vibhava* – we will have to posit variable *rasas* also. But *rasa* is *eka-rupa*, unchanging and invariable;
5. Bharata's classification of *hasya* into six types according to six kinds of *sthayibhava* become unnecessary if the variability of *sthayibhava* conditions the variability of *rasa*;
6. We will have to posit hundreds of *rasas* for a *sthayibhava* such as *rati* (in view of the ten states of *kama* enumerated by Vatsyayana);
7. In any case, *sthayibhavas* like grief are most intense in the beginning, and weaken with time. So, intensification of *shoka* not being possible, how may *karuna rasa* be evoked/generated?
8. Generally, therefore, to say that intensified *sthayibhava* is *rasa* is not acceptable.

Shankuka then posits his own view: what is present in the object of representation (Rama, etc.) as a reflex (*anukarana*) of the *sthayibhava* and is an inference (*anumiti*) from the enactment of the performer, who through causal *vibhava*, *anubava* as effects and the supporting *vyabhicharibhavas* generates, through his effort (born of practice and training), this reflex of the *sthayibhava* known as *rasa* (which is therefore different from *sthayibhava*).

The third view is that of Bhattatauta (Abhinavagupta's teacher and referred to as *upadhyaya* by him), who rejects Shankuka's *rasanukaranavada*. Is the characterisation of *rasa* as reflex, he asks, is this *rasa*-as-reflex (*anukarana rupa rasa*) made from the point of view of the auditor or the performer (*nata*) or is it characterised as the experience as it was, or is the argument based on Bharata's having said this himself? As it is, Abhinavagupta reports, none of these is valid, because a reflex has to be grasped/cognised as a reflex. But the *sthayibhava* which is a cognitive state of the self (*chittavritti rupa*) and non-material cannot be seen to have an identifiable reflex in the material body or the performance or the words of the performer. We have to see/experience both the original and the reflex to mark one of them as a reflex. But while the *rati* of the performer is experienced by the auditors, none of them have access to the original *sthayibhava*, the *rati* in Rama. Thus, the *rati* that becomes perceptible in the performer is just *rati* and cannot be said to be a reflex (*anukarana*) of the original *sthayibhava*. It may be argued that since the *rati* in

the performer who is enacting Rama is made perceptible by artificial, surrogate *vibhavas*, etc., this *sthayibhava* in the performer is *pratiyamana* (symbolic), not real, and therefore it is a reflex. But this argument is also rejected on the grounds that while the *vibhava* etc., are surrogate, for the auditors, the *rati* in the performer is real; if it were not so, there will be no effect. This is explained by the fact that the ordinary mind associates events/experiences with the known, with well-known causes or factors. So for the auditors, the *vibhava*, etc., are real: that is, the auditors begin by accepting them as real. Further, while knowledge arising from artificial, untrue causes may be false knowledge (*mithyajnana*), it cannot be called a reflex (*anukarana*). It cannot be a reflex from the point of view of the performer either, for, to establish something as a reflex of something, *sadrishyata* is required. But in an enactment, the original or the object of representation is never present and therefore *anukarana* (reflex or imitation) is ruled out. Nor is *anukarana* of *vastu-sthiti*, experience as it was, possible because what becomes perceptible *later*, after a lapse of time, cannot be called a *vastu-vritti*, a reconstruction of the original object. Nor is there any statement by Bharata to the effect that "the imitation of *sthayibhava* is *rasa*." An unnamed commentator, apparently an adherent of Samkhya school, is also reported to have said that the inner conditions of *sukha*, *dukkha*, etc., are brought about by external factors, *vibhava*, etc., that are variable like everything else according to the *trigunatmaka prakriti* (*sattva-raj-*

tamas) and therefore *rasa* is also variable *sukha-dukkha-mohatmaka*. This contradicts Bharata's theory, in which the inner *sthayibhava* pre-exists the conjunction with external *vibhava*, etc., which is not the case here, as the inner *sthayibhava* and the condition, according to this view, are brought about by external factors. Further, in an integral cognition (*rasa*) three mutually exclusive perceptions (*sukha*, *dukkha* and *moha*) cannot co-exist.

The fourth view is that of Bhatta Nayaka, who says that *rasa* is neither perceptible (*pratiti*) nor produced (*utpanna*) nor manifested (*abhivyakta*). It is an object of experience or "consumption," *bhoga*. Now for him *rasa* is not something out there – it is experienced in the self; it exists in the self and is "activated" by the performance. If it exists in the object of representation or in the performer, it is of no use to the *samajika*, the participating spectator. If it is a matter of perception, the auditor should feel sorrowful when grief is enacted and so on. But this is not so. He experiences *ananda*. Further, marvellous events or characters (Hanuman or his crossing of the ocean) cannot be generalised to include one's ordinary self. The same objections hold if *rasa* is believed to be produced. And if pre-existing *rasa* is supposed to be made manifest by *vibhava*, etc., then it will be variable according to the variation of external objects or causes. And again we have to ask whether it exists in the other, the performer, or in the self of the auditor.

Bhatta Nayaka's position is that *rasa* is an extraordinary experience in the

inner self, almost like being in the presence of the *shanta-purusha*, blissful, illuminating *para-brahman*. This is made possible by the potential of *kavya*, that is, language, to evoke a world different from that of experience and memory, a world laced by *rajasika* and *tamasika gunas* and structured by the excellences of *kavya* and by *alamkaras*, figures of speech, a world predominantly *sattvika*, blissful and illuminating. This art-construct transforms the ordinary world of *vibhavas*, etc., into an extraordinary experience of heightened consciousness called *rasa*.

Abhinavagupta, however, says that Shankuka's arguments against Bhatta Lollata's position hold against Bhatta Nayaka's position as well, particularly the argument about *sthayibhava* as the *rasa* and the consequent variability of *rasa*. Further, what is the status of an entity that is neither perceptible nor produced nor manifested, as *rasa* evidently is in Bhatta Nayaka's position? But both the *bhoga* (experience) and *asvadana* (tasting) processes posited by Bhatta Nayaka in his explanation of art experience not only involve objects of perception but are themselves perceptible. The very word *bhoga* involves the senses.

Abhinavagupta goes on to say that even if the argument that the perception of *rasa* consists precisely in its being experienced (*bhogikarana*), there are other objections to Bhatta Nayaka's position. We have to posit endless variable experiential perceptions (*asvadanatmaka pratitiya*) varying with their modifications through the three-fold nature (*trigunatmaka prakriti*). But

then, as has already been stated, how can a non-material experience such as *rasa* be divided, separated and classified. There is no limit or identity to what the postulated linguistic processes of *abbidha* (power to denote), *bhavakatva* (abstract denotation) and *bhojakatva* (individual construction of meaning) can evoke. *Kavya*, verbal compositions, are said to denote *rasas*. If by that one means knowledge or cognition of a "taste" or experience, it is acceptable. But what *bhavana*, the denotation of words, constructs is not the *rasa* but the causal object (*vishaya*) of *rasa*. Thus, to take a simple example, what is constructed in a poem such as Wordsworth's "Michael" is the *sthayibhava* of *shoka*, grief. The *rasa*, *karuna*, compassion, is evoked but constituted in the self of the reader/experiencer.

III

In this manner, in his commentary on the *rasa-sutra* (NS 6.32), Abhinavagupta recalls the explanations of five scholars in the tradition – Bhatta Lollata, Sankuka, Bhattatauta, the Samkhya thinker and Bhatta Nayaka – and shows that the explanations of these thinkers do not give a satisfactory definition of *rasa* within the framework of Bharata's theory, particularly in relation to *sthayibhava*. Thus, the question now is: what is the actual form or substance (*tattva*) of *rasa*? In fact, it would appear that *rasa* is devoid of a substratum (*niralambana*) and appears to be a

completely abstract concept.

Interestingly, Abhinavagupta says, "so what?" That is, so what if it is indefinable and cannot be locked on to something already known? So many Vedic concepts, Abhinavagupta argues, defy definition, and *rasa* is a concept posited in the Veda. Therefore, *rasa* as a category has Vedic authority. Innumerable thinkers, Abhinavagupta points out, have tried to show the vacuity of Vedic concepts and principles. But such attempts have not succeeded in refuting these Vedic concepts – rather, in the process of disputation, with the progressive sharpening of the mental faculty and the consequent deepening of understanding, the knowledge coded in the concept gradually becomes clearer and better elucidated. The normal epistemologies appear to be limited if they merely contradict the Vedic authority (*shabda pramana*). The restless intellect of the analysts gradually ascends and "sees" (grasps) the substance of the concept, and that final understanding is important. The early steps in the process, the alternatives constituted by the fluid, non-determinate intellect are not important. That is, they are important only in so far as they lead to a determinate, final understanding. It is amazing, he adds, that the first constitution of objects, even material objects, *padarthas*, is almost *niralambana*, without a substratum. But once a foundation is laid, marvellous solid cities and bridges are built on them.¹² Thus, Abhinava

¹² As Acharya Vishveshvara observes in his comment on Abhinavagupta's statement: "Though we do see some foundation/substratum for all the objects of knowledge, yet that foundation/substratum (*adhara*) itself has no foundation/substratum (*adhara*) – *mula mulabhavadamulam mulam*. A root has no root and

says, we have not refuted the principles of the *purvacharyas*, the earlier teachers, because establishing coherence among the ideas of the earlier teachers amounts almost to constructing an original theory.

So what is *rasa*? Abhinavagupta sets out by saying that he has nothing new to say and that he would only paraphrase Bharata: "Is the meaning of the composition (*kavyartha*) *rasa*?" Taking the example of Mimamsa sentences, Abhinava sets out to answer this question. The *arthavadas* (statements that praise or extol) of Mimamsa, such as "*vanaspati* (trees and plants) sat in the *yajna*," "*prajapati* took out the fat of his body and poured it into fire," point towards, suggest, certain actions, their performers and the ability of these performers to perform these. A competent performer (*adbikari*) is one who likes some action(s) and would like to perform these. Such a person, on hearing such a sentence, first has a preliminary, common, direct perception or understanding of its meaning. This is followed by a different, deeper understanding arrived at, in this case, by excluding the past tense and substituting one's self for "*prajapati*" to take the form "let me sit, take this, give/pour." In the same way, Abhinava continues,

from a poetic or a literary sentence, a *sabridaya* (one who shares the sensibility of the composer) arrives at the evoked/suggested *rasa*-laced meaning through a process that is more complex and elaborate than the ordinary comprehension of sentential meaning. An *adbikari*, a competent auditor, thus, would be one endowed with the ability to comprehend *rasa*, possessing a clear heart and an extraordinary ability (*pratibha*) to grasp the sentential meaning.¹³ This is a mental/cognitive perception, intuitive, and almost as if one were actually in the presence of the experience.

After the comprehension of sentential meanings, the cognitive/prepositional content of that, and that sentence, free of the coordinate of time, takes shape in the mind almost as if the signified is actually present to the self (*sakshatkaratmaka*). This cognitive experience/knowledge, Abhinavagupta explains, is entirely autonomous. Illustrating with the example of Kalidas's *Shakuntala*, he says that the unobstructed, focussed experience/cognition of the fear (*bhaya*) of the young one of the deer, freed of the coordinates of time and space through *sadbarnikarana*, generalisation, freed of the self-linking, regulative "I fear" or "He fears," and different from the real

a source or core has no source or core. But on the foundation of this substratum-less source or core, the whole world is constructed. In the same way, though all the principles proposed as the foundation of *rasa* have been refuted and the concept has been left without any substratum, the entire superstructure of literary theory and *rasa*-framework has been built on that concept" (469).

¹³ Bhartrihari had noted that the meaning of the sentence is understood as "a flash of understanding (*pratibha*) ... it can not be explained to others as such and such. It is something in definable.... None can avoid in one's activities that *pratibha* ... even the animals.... Who transforms the voice of the male cuckoo in spring?" (VP 2.143-49). Abhinavagupta suggests that there is a special endowment that enables the *rasa*-experience.

life experience/knowledge that may be produced of joy or sorrow, realised in the self is the *bbayanaka rasa*, the "terrifying," that fills our whole Being. Our Self remains all the while in a detached state: neither indifferent nor very involved. Since such cognition is autonomous to the experiencer, it is "abstract" and therefore appears to be *ekarupa*, undifferentiated to all auditors (*samajika*). All auditors have the same *rasa* experience as all often have the same inborn sense of joy and sorrow (*sukha*, *dukkha*). The fact of the self deeply moved by such a *rasa*-experience is denoted by the word *chamatkara* (literally, "miracle/marvel"). It can be understood also as a mental operation, a mental construction or a flash of intuition (*pratibhāna*). As such, it is neither of this world, nor false, not describable, not resembling anything nor a reflection of anything in this world. Thus the unobstructed experience (*pratiti*) in the self of a *bhava* is called *rasa*.

Abhinavagupta has been emphatic about the nature of *rasa* as unobstructed/unhindered perception/experience. Not everyone is able to have this experience. Next, he discusses seven kinds of hindrances in the realisation of *rasa*-experience. The first is the inability to believe in the reality of what is being enacted. If one considers what is enacted to be impossible, then in the absence of belief in the sincerity of the enactment one cannot have the *rasa* experience. To overcome this, well-known objects, narratives and protagonists are made the subject matter of representation in plays, with the object of communicating some

message or imparting some knowledge. The second hindrance in the realisation of *rasa* is the auditor's close identification of the experience either with his own self or with the performer (*nata*), which reduces the dimension of the experience to the particular, and the auditor in that case is all the time paraphrasing the art-experience in relation to his self and limiting it to his own hopes and anxieties – the *ekarupta* is lost. This prevents the cognition of the universal, general experience that is *rasa*. The third hindrance is being in a state of affliction – being afflicted by sorrow or joy. In such a state, one cannot have the "one-pointedness" (*ekagrata*) of consciousness that is necessary to immerse oneself in aesthetic experience. The fourth hindrance is that of epistemological inadequacy, the almost complete reliance on words and inferences. Related to this is the fifth hindrance – exclusion of direct perception in verbal art. Perception is the strongest means of knowledge, but, in verbal art, one depends on language and the experience has to be inferred or constructed by the auditor. Even then, the human psyche is such that our cognitions await direct perception or experience for confirmation and complete clarity. Such is the strength of perception that what is gained from direct perception is not modified by a thousand inferences or verbal knowledge. Thus, the knowledge that arises from language is *vikalpa jnana* (that which arises purely from words) or has the nature of *spḥota* (mental construction) and therefore is not sufficient for *rasa*-experience. This is

where drama has an edge: in drama there is enactment (*abhinaya*) on the stage and *abhinaya* is in the domain of perception – the auditor actually sees and hears and does not depend only on words or inference. The sixth hindrance is distraction by some non-primary element of experience. Thus the auditor may be preoccupied by the *vibhava* elements or in the *vyabbichari*, the auxiliary states, and be unable to go beyond to the primary (*pradhana*) *rasa*-experience.

But what, then, is a "primary *rasa*-experience"? Only those *rasa*-experiences, Abhinava explains, are primary that are related to the four ends of life, the *purusharthas*, *dharmas*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksha*, which Abhinavagupta arranges in the sequence of *kama*, *artha*, *dharma* and *moksha*, a sequence beginning with the strongest and the most pervasive psychic force or urge. Accordingly, the four corresponding *sthayibhavas*, *rati*, *krodha*, *utsaha* and *nirveda*, are the primary states:¹⁴ *rati* involves *kama* directly, and *dharma*, righteousness, indirectly. *Krodha*, anger, is situated in *artha*, worldly objects. *Utsaha* is involved in *kama* and also in *dharma*. *Nirveda*, born of *tattva jnana*, true knowledge, is an instrument of *moksha*, deliverance from the bonds of this world of the here and the now. One of these four is generally predominant in a play, though each of them may be interlaced, in terms of substance and quality, with the others. When experienced directly in the self, this *rasa*-experience, this knowledge, is a form of joy (*ananda svarupa*) – even in the relish

of grief (at separation), Abhinavagupta points out, the hearts of young, innocent girls experience peace (*visranti*), and it is the absence of the peace of the heart that is rightly designated as *dukkha* (sorrow) by the Samkhya thinkers. However, each of these four primary *bhavas* may be touched by, or coloured by, the elements of *dukkha*. The other five *sthayibhavas* are even more subject to being marked or coloured by causes and factors (*vibhavas*) found in ordinary people. It is the tendency of the ordinary person to laugh, to mourn, to be frightened, to speak ill of others and to be surprised or amazed (at the happiness or material well-being of others). So *hasya* (laughter), *shoka* (grief), *bhaya* (fear), *jugupsa* (disgust) and *vismaya* (wonderment) are not primary (*pradhana*). As instruments of the *purusharthas*, all these may be useful auxiliaries in a primary *rasa*-experience such as *rati*, etc.

A categorical statement follows that these nine are the *sthayibhavas*, and no more. These are of the nature of inborn drives or states resulting from the impressions of so many lives (*janmantara*) and all human beings are born with these drives – they are genetic endowments. The meta-rule for human nature is "dislike of sorrow (*dukkha*) and eagerness for happiness (*sukha*)."¹⁵ So, every human being:

1. seeks pleasure (this indicates the *sthayibhava*, *rati*),
2. for pleasure laughs at others (*hasya*),
3. suffers on being separated from the source of pleasure in the form of a

¹⁴ This would also determine the choice of subject matter or themes.

- loved object or person (this indicates *shoka*),
4. on account of such a separation, develops anger (*krোধa*),
 5. on account of helplessness is afraid (*bhaya*),
 6. yearns for and makes efforts to acquire or achieve something (this indicates *utsaha*),
 7. is full of dislike for unpleasant things (*jugupsa*),
 8. is surprised at unexpected deeds or conduct or thoughts (this indicates *vismaya*), and
 9. has the urge to renounce all these burdens or constraints (*nirveda*).

No one, says Abhinavagupta, is born without these *chittavrittis* cognitive/mental tendencies; the only difference is that some of us have more of one and some have less. In some people these are directed at proper (*uchita*) objects/ persons, in others at the undesirable, and only those are worthy of being emulated, enjoined or represented that are helpful in the realisation of the four ends of life (*purusharthas*).

On the other hand, the *vyabhicharis* are transient¹⁵ and auxiliary. They are not inborn and they take shape in our consciousness temporarily in the presence of the given causal factors (*vibhava*, etc.) and when the causal factors cease to be, they dissolve and do not necessarily continue to exist as *samskaras* (traces/impressions). But the *sthayibhavas* continue to be present as strong *samskaras* even after their operation is over and even when they

apparently dissolve. In fact, the auxiliary *bhavas* are contingent on the *sthayibhava*: they are brought up in the consciousness by the central, primary experience. In a beautiful analogy, Abhinavagupta compares the *vyabhicharibhavas* to the different coloured beads strung on a thread, the thread of *sthayibhava*. Like the coloured beads, the auxiliary *bhavas* all become a part of one string, and while at specific points the string seems to take different colours, when the thread becomes visible these become the shades that the thread of *sthayibhava* assumes momentarily. In between and ever so often, between the "beads" the *sthayibhava* is experienced in its native, uncoloured state. In this manner, the sixth hindrance – distraction by subordinate elements – is clarified and refuted by establishing the primacy of *sthayibhavas* in relation to the other *bhavas*.

Then the seventh possible hindrance in *rasa*-realisation is taken up. This is doubt, *samsaya*. As there is no one-to-one correspondence between *vibhava*, *anubhava* and *vyabhicharibhava* on the one hand and the *sthayibhava* on the other, there can be doubt about the *sthayibhava* that is signified by the enactment of any element of the three. Thus tears can signify joy, or being deeply moved, or sorrow or even an eye disease. So, on seeing tears, should one assume the presence of grief (*shoka*) as the cause? There can be doubt. Abhinavagupta explains that Bharata by using the word *samyoga*, conjunction, refutes this hindrance. It is the conjunction of all the three – *vibhava*,

¹⁵ As is beautifully said, they are *uday-asta rupa*, that rise and set.

anubhava and *vyabbicharibhava* – that evokes the *sthayibhava*. The conjunction of *vibhava*, *anubhava* and *vyabbicharibhava* will unambiguously evoke only one *sthayibhava*. Once evoked, the *sthayibhava* along with its manifesters or markers, the three subordinate *bhavas*, collectively engenders in the intellect of the auditor, a meaning (*artha*) in the form of an extraordinary (*alaukika*), unhindered (*nirvighna*) cognition (consciousness) that is the object/subject of tasting, experiencing (*charvana*). This tasting/experiencing is the substance, the only meaning (*artha*), of a composition, and comes into being only for that time and does not pre-exist nor continue to exist afterwards: it exists only in that interregnum, and this is *rasa*, an entity different from the *sthayibhava*. So *sthayibhava* is not *rasa*, and only as a matter of form is it said that *sthayibhava* has turned into *rasa*, because, unlike the *sthayibhava*, *rasa* does not arise from any of the well-known epistemologies – it is not a product of *smṛiti*, memory, *anumāna*, inference, or *laukika pratyakṣa*, worldly perception. As something experienced or grasped in the heart, and therefore having the possibility of being the same (*ekarūpa*) for everyone, the auditor (*samajika*) with the power of his sympathetic consciousness (*sabridayatva*) experiences

through absorption (*tanmayi bhava*) the *vibhavas*, etc., as non-partitive *rasa*-taste-seeds, the generators, of proper *charvana*. This experiencing/ tasting, indefinable in itself, is gained by the strength of an extraordinary conjunction of *vibhavas*, etc. It is a process that is evidently different from the known epistemologies in that it does not suffer from their limitation; it is also different from *yogi-pratyakṣa*, the extraordinary perception of a *yogi* in *samādhi*, in that it is neither detached (*tatastha*) nor initially vague. It is also different from the perception of a *paramayogi*, the ascetic who has renounced everything, in that it is not stabilised and, unlike in the case of the *paramayogi pratyakṣa*, there is a distinct element of *āhlada*, joy.

As the *vibhavadi* are generalised in the process, when *rati* etc., manifests itself, there is no room for any hindrances or obstruction. This can happen only if the *vibhava*, with their particularity, are either the cause (*karaka hetu*) or the manifesters (*jñāpyahetu*) of *rasa*, which is not the case.¹⁶ *Rasa* is therefore neither produced (*karya*) nor manifested (*jñāpya*). In that case, what kind of an object is it, for objects are either *produced* or *manifested*?

Abhinavagupta says that if *rasa* is not like any other object, it only establishes its extra-ordinariness (*alaukikatva*). If it is to be compared, it can be compared

¹⁶ There are two kinds of *padārtha*: (1) those that are produced (*karya*), and are the effect/result, of a *karana*, as Nyaya philosophy argues, and (2) those that are manifested (*abhivṛyakta*), which, according to Sāṃkhya philosophy, exist in a subtle form in their cause itself (as oil in seeds) and are made manifest by some instrument (*karana*). The unusual *vibhavas* are neither *karaka-hetu* nor *jñāpyahetu* for *rasa*, which then becomes an unusual object (*padārtha*) being neither produced nor manifested. This is how the argument runs.

¹⁷ An Indian summer drink made of almonds, fruit seeds, milk, pepper, jaggery, ice, and optionally, with

only to the "taste" of *thandai*¹⁷ – its "taste" is not like the taste of any of its elements; it is a transcendental taste. The same holds true of *rasa*. It is *vilakshana*, defies known markers. In that case, the *purvapaksha* argues, *rasa* cannot be an object of knowledge (*pramya*). Abhinavagupta agrees that its not being an object of knowledge is of no consequence, for *rasa* is an object to be experienced/tasted.

One more objection is raised. It is noted that Bharata talks of its *nishpatti*, maturation or generation. Abhinavagupta, however, says that *nishpatti* is predicated not of *rasa*, but of its being tasted (*asvadana*). He concludes that this "tasting" is an operation neither of known epistemologies nor of known causes (*karana*). Even then, being marked by self-consciousness, they cannot be dismissed as unreal or untrue. This "tasting" is "perceptible" (*pratiti*), but it is obviously different from ordinary sensory perception.

Abhinavagupta then sums up this detailed analysis of the *rasa-sutra*.

In a play, the performer wears dress and ornaments similar to those of the object of representation and these fill his intellect. But in spite of his knowledge and impressions of the past (performance/experience) and in spite of the discipline imposed by the text, *Rama-buddhi*, "the way Rama thought or felt," does not get stabilised in the performer's intellect. So the enactment

(*anukarana*) is de-linked from the space-time coordinates of both the performer (*anukarta*) and the performed (*anukarya*). And the ordinary worldly *vyabbicharibhavas* employed to suggest *rati*, etc. also do not conform to the requirements of any given space-time. In this experience of *rati*, the auditor is not impersonal or detached, as his self is marked by traces of the past or/and past-life experiences. The appearance of Sita-Rama, etc., is also not bound to any particular original, so that a given dress or ornament will not impede the communication or grasp of the experience.¹⁸ Nor does one experience the *meaning* or *bhava* as belonging strictly to the performer so that the auditor does not feel sadness or jealousy at what he sees as the *rati*-experience of the performer. The experience therefore exists neither in the object of representation nor in the performer. So, quoting both the Buddhist *kshanikatavadi* (momentariness) thinkers and the *sthiratavadi* (proponents of given fixed material reality) Naiyayikas with approval, he talks of the stream of consciousness (*chittadbhava*) and says that *shringara rasa*, for example, is the *rati*, a form, grasped by the auditor, in the same *one* flow of cognitive consciousness (*chittavritti pravaha*). Like all forms, *rasa*, too, is a momentary formation.

Abhinavagupta then illustrates with examples from Sanskrit literature how from words and from enactment the auditors grasp definite knowledge. Just

cannabis, prepared through a long process of grinding and mixing and icing.

¹⁸ Hence, the different enactments of the story of the *Ramayana* in Cambodia, Thailand, Bali, Japan and even in different parts of India.

as the worshipper who contemplates upon the idol of Vasudeva does not have the perception "This is Vasudeva," yet through the means of the idol, the particular god, by becoming the object of a clear resolve, grants blessings to the worshipper. In the same way, the substance of the definitive knowledge born of the performer's enactment, free of particular time and space, grants to the auditor beneficial knowledge called *vidhishtaniya artha* in the form of "this action leads to this result." Just as the Vedic injunctions (*vidhivakyas*) give the knowledge of what one ought to do (*kartavya*), in the same way one gets the knowledge of what should be done and what should not be done (*kartavya-akartavya*) from drama. As this arises from what is grasped through visual perception and as there are no impediments in these cognitions, the knowledge arising from drama is valid knowledge (*samyaka jnana*).

The whole process cannot be completely understood except through analogy and Abhinavagupta cites the analogy (*drishtana*) from cooking that Bharata-muni uses: "Where do we see a new unfamiliar object (*rasa*) resulting from the conjunction (*samyoga*) of different objects?" In cooking, answers Bharata, who uses three terms – *vyanjana*, *ausbadhi* and *samyoga* – which he then explains by way of this analogy. Elements required for preparing food are called *vyanjana* – pungent, sweet and sour, they may be of different kinds, such as curd and carrot-wine. Wheat, tamarind, pulses and turmeric are

ausbadhis, herbs, used in cooking, while jaggery is *dravya*. Mixing all these properly in the process of cooking, through their conjunction (*samyoga*) achieved by an able cook, the *shadava rasa* is realised. In music, *shadava* is a *raga* family in which only six *svaras*, notes (*sa, re, ga, ma* and *dha*), are used. Extended to food, *shadava* stands for a *rasa*, taste, that is produced by mixing materials of six tastes or *rasas*, sweet, sour, bitter, tangy and astringent, these being the six tastes, *rasas*, in medicine and cooking. *Shadava rasa* is the transcendental taste, a new taste different from all of the six. In the same way the *sthayibhavas*, different from the worldly *bhavas*, in extraordinary conjunction (*samyoga*) with *vibhavas*, etc. momentarily reach *rasatva*, the state of *rasa*. What, then, is the meaning of the word *rasa* when used for *shringara*, etc.? The word is known to denote "the taste of food," "mercury," "chemical," "medicine," "attribute of water,"¹⁹ etc. Then how does one explain the use of this word for aesthetic experience? Bharata answers: "By virtue of its being tasted/tastable." However, it is pointed out that knowledge/cognition born of the organ of taste (the tongue) is termed *asvadana*, tasting. As *shringara*, etc., are not experienced through the organ of taste, then how can it be termed *asvadana*? This is so because of the three-fold *sadrishtya*, similarity, between the experiencing/tasting of food and the art experience. This similarity is along three dimensions: of the experienced *bhogya*, the experience *bhokta*, and the fruit or

¹⁹ See *Amarakosha* 1.5.7, 1.5.9, 1.7.17, 2.9.99, 3.3.227. See also Kapil Kapoor and Nalini M. Ratnam, *Literary Theory: Indian Conceptual Framework* (Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press, 1998): 106.

effect, *phal*, of the experience. In properly prepared food, the different *padarthas* (constituent elements) produce a certain taste (*asvadhyata*). Only those who eat this food with concentration of mind (*ekagrata*) experience its taste, and if one's mind is elsewhere while eating, there is no clear cognition²⁰ of the quality of taste. The fruit/effect of absorbing the "taste" (of food) is delight, satisfaction, nourishment, strength and good health. One should understand the same about the *rasa* manifested by enactment (*abhinaya*). The focussed (*ekagra*), absorbed (*tanmaya*) auditor, in the act of "chewing" the *sthayibhava* (its *charvana*), experiences its "taste," *rasa*, the joyous knowledge of *kama* or *dharma* etc., and the ability gained from watching the enactment may be understood as the "fruit"/benefit (of art experience). Therefore, on account of the similarity of *karta* (agent), *karma* (object) and *phal* ("fruit"), the special cognition arising from *vibhava* etc., is described as the "tasting-activity" (*rasana kriya*) etc., and the experience, after the analogy of "taste," is called *rasa*.²¹

At this juncture, Abhinavagupta refers to an interesting theory advanced by some scholars. The *bhokta* (experiencer) according to them is intrinsically tripartite – self (*atma*), act or faculty of tasting (*rasana*), and mind (*mana*) – but the *rasa* theory deals only

with the act of tasting. Abhinavagupta reminds them of their own postulation that the self as a means of experience changes its location, transforms itself and "occupies"/becomes/informs the mind (*mana*) and the mind in turn becomes *rasa-sthaniya*, that is, becomes informed by the taste – in fact, it itself tastes. Given this, he says, we should drop this argument, proceeding to quote Bharata's *anuvanshiya sloka*: "the *sabridaya purusha*²² tastes with his *mana* (mind)." More than the operation of the tongue, Abhinavagupta says it is the operation of the mind that is called the "taste" (*asvadana*) of the art-experience; this mental cognition is actually present and constitutes the "relish" of *shringara rasa*, etc. Thus, the word *rasa* is used, Abhinavagupta notes, in its primary denotative sense and not as a metaphor. In fact, drama, *natya*, is nothing but a configuration (*samudaya*) of *rasas*.

Abhinavagupta then goes on to make an important extension. He says that *rasa* is present not only in *natya*, drama, the *preksha*, visual, compositions, but also in *kavya*, in the *shravya* (aural) narratives. He quotes his own teacher Bhattatauta, who said that *rasa* is experienced even without enactment (*abhinaya*) in *sargabandha kavya*, the highly structured long verbal compositions such as the epics. Abhinavagupta explains that through

²⁰ Abhinavagupta uses the word *abhimana* for this process; *abhimana* also means "a special measurement."

²¹ See the *anuvanshiya slokas* after (NS 6.32, 33). But these *slokas* are handed down by the tradition (of *Natyashastra* scholarship) and are not necessarily a part of the core text. Acharya Vishveshvara accepts them as *anuvanshiya* (*Abhinavabharati ke Teen Adhyaya* 501).

²² The word *purush* is here used to connote the active, intelligent principle, and as such, the equivalent of *atma*.

the perfection (*vistara*) and maturity (*praudbata*) of the narrative style, the beautifully delineated gardens, the luminosity of light, and the coolness of the moon, etc. are all experienced as if they had been actually present before one's eyes. The excellences of poetry, its images, appropriate language, the action, the mode of articulation, the dress and the ornaments, all contribute to *rasa* realisation. In this fashion, he says, narratives are also forms of enactment. So too, there can be elements of narrative in drama and the dramatic elements in narratives.

Abhinava sets up *kavya* as a higher category, and one that is classifiable into three: *dasarupaka* (ten kinds of plays), *sargabandha* (structured long poems such as the epic), and *muktaka*, short, autonomous poems. Continuing with his comparison of dramatic and narrative poetry, in a statement reminiscent of Aristotle's,²³ Abhinavagupta says that those who have hearts pure like a mirror, are not susceptible, unlike ordinary people, upon seeing or reading a play, to anger, excitement and desire; indeed, they are able to cognise the extraordinary experience even by merely listening to (or reading) a play.

To help the ordinary realise in themselves the extraordinary *rasa*-experience, Bharata prescribes the modes of enactment, song and dance, but Abhinava says it is important that all should experience this, for drama seeks the well-being of all. Through this method, even ordinary people are able to experience *rasa*. This indicates that *rasa*

is in *natya*, enactment. Abhinavagupta adds, significantly, that *kavya* is also *natya* without its structural elements – evidently the great teacher has in mind the fact that as an evocation, *kavya* involves enactment in the mind in the form of mental images. So there is *rasa-anubhuti* (*rasa*-experience) in *kavya* (here, non-dramatic verbal composition) as well.

So, one may conclude that *rasa* is not in the performer, the *nata*. How else would one explain the *rasa*-experience in non-dramatic compositions? The *nata* is also called the "*patra*," the vessel that holds the drink whose taste is experienced by the one who drinks. So too the *nata*: he enables, facilitates the *rasa*-experience. This *rasa*, therefore, comes into being in the self of the auditor. Every other element in the totality of the art experience is instrumental towards the realisation of this experience in the self. In fact, Abhinavagupta sums up, the experience of the joyous, knowing self, *atma*, which is *anandamaya jnanasvarupa* by definition, takes the form of *rasa*. For the constitution of that specific joy-permeated knowing self, the traces/impressions, the *sthayibhavas*, *rati*, *shoka* (grief), etc., are instrumental. This also explains why grief too gives joy in the experience of the artistic.

The above explanation also establishes that the *bhavas* lead to *rasa*, and not the other way round. But this creates an apparent contradiction: it was said in the beginning that without *rasa* no meaning gets constituted and thus one begins by expounding *rasa*. How

²³ Aristotle in the *Poetics* makes a distinction between tragedy as a reading experience and as a performance and says that as theatre, tragedy is a lower form of art that appeals and makes sense to the common people while as a reading text, it needs a cultivated mind (a *sahridaya* perhaps?) (26).

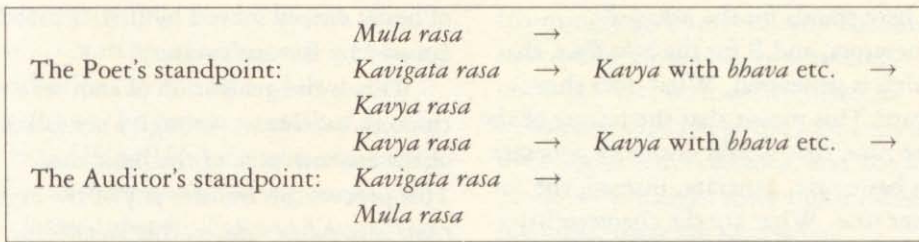


Figure 1

does one reconcile these two: that *rasa* is primary and that *rasa* is the form that *bhava* assumes? Explaining the *drishtanta* in the seventh *anuvanshiya sloka* attributed to Bharata, Abhinava says that *rasa* is like the seed of the *kavya*-tree that integrates and makes sense of the whole composition and enables us to grasp the joy-permeated knowledge. This seed-*rasa* is planted in the poet and it is this poetic *rasa* (*kavigata rasa*), as different from the seed-*rasa* (*mula rasa*) that the *nata*, performer, seeks to enact. After having cognised this poetic *rasa* (or *rasa* as grasped by the poet), the auditor through his analytical intellect recognises the *vibhava*, etc. So the realisation of the poet's *rasa* (*kavigata rasa*), instead of the seed-*rasa*, is enabled by *sthayibhava* etc. (See Figure 1.)

The poet is also like the auditor – he also constructs a *rasa*-experience in his self, cultivates his own understanding of the nature of the original experience and accordingly structures it and interprets it. Abhinavagupta, to extend the argument, quotes Anandavardhana: "If the poet is *shringari*, that is, if the poet's self is effulgent and beautiful, the whole *jagat*, all this enumerable reality, becomes permeated by *rasa* (*rasa-maya*). And if the poet's self is devoid of *rasa*,

the world becomes/appears *rasa*-less, dry." Abhinavagupta concludes with another analogy: the *kavigata rasa* functions like the seed for the tree and its fruit is the auditor's *rasa*. For the auditor, the whole tree is permeated by the *rasa* he experiences. And the same for the poet: as one who experiences a *rasa* in his heart, the whole world, *jagata*, is *rasamaya*, permeated by *rasa* (*raso vai sa*, says the *shruti*). Notice that a bilateral relationship holds between the seed and the plant – the seed produced the plant and the plant produces the seed. In the same manner, *rasa* determines *vibhava*, etc., and *vibhava*, etc., evokes *rasa*.

IV

Abhinavagupta now moves on to the inter-relationships among the eight *rasas* (NS ka. 32-38). Following Bharata, Abhinavagupta shows how the four basic *rasas* act as sources from whence proceed the other four:

A	B
From	To
1. <i>shringara</i>	5. <i>hasya</i>
2. <i>raudra</i>	6. <i>karuna</i>
3. <i>vira</i>	7. <i>adbhuta</i>
4. <i>vibhatsa</i>	8. <i>bhayanaka</i>

A here stands for the *utpadaka*, generators, and B for the *utpadhya*, that which is generated. What does this mean? This means that the factors of the base *rasa*, that would normally generate the basic *rasa*, generate, instead, the other *rasa*. What are the characteristics of this process of generation? It is pointed out that each generating relationship between the generator and the generated is different from any other.

There are four kinds of generated-generator relationships. *Shringara to hasya* is the first of these, and is a relationship of *tadabhasa*, i.e., of the same appearance. Thus, when the *vibhava*, *anubhava* and *vyabhicharibhava* required for *shringara* are present, the *sthayibhava rati* becomes cognisable and is experienced as *shringara*. But when it is only a semblance of *rati*, mere desire (*charvanamatra*), it will give merely the semblance of *shringara*, mere *shringarabhasa*. In that case, the function of *vibhava*, etc., gets re-defined and they may become instruments for a very different *rasa*, the *hasya rasa*. In other words, in such a case, the final effect is quite different from what is expected. The example that is given is that of Ravana's desire for Sita, which may offer the semblance of *rati*: Ravana displays his weakness for Sita, who is the *alambana vibhava*. But the absence of mutuality (Sita is not drawn to him), Ravana's age and his auxiliary states of worry, self-pity and delusion and his mourning-*anubhava* (contrary to his *prakriti*), all collectively being inappropriate (not *uchita*), are reduced to mere appearances of themselves and get re-defined to function as *vibhavas* of the *hasya rasa* instead. The audience, instead

of being deeply moved by this, is merely amused by Ravana's state.

This is the generation of another *rasa* through *tadabhasa*, through a semblance of the *vibhava*, etc., of the basic *rasa*. This process can transfer any of the eight *rasas* into *hasya rasa*, as this *anauchitya*, "inappropriateness," can afflict the *vibhava* and *anubhava* of any *rasa* and also the *vyabhicharis*. This can affect *shanta rasa* too, when *nirveda*, which is the *sthayibhava* for *shanta rasa*, may begin to have the semblance (*tadabhasa*) of being a *hetu* for *moksha*, deliverance, the fourth end of life, in which case the *shanta rasa* will take the form of *hasya*.

Thus if someone displays grief for one who is not dear to him, then, being inappropriate, the *karuna rasa* becomes *hasya*. So much so that even *hasya* in conjunction with inappropriateness will only be *hasyabhasa* and may take some other form (e.g. *vibhatsa*).

The second kind of relationship is one of necessary concomitance – that is, another *rasa* necessarily appears after the fruition of the first. Thus *raudra* is necessarily followed by *karuna*, for *raudra* involves, among others, killing and holding someone prisoner and both these are causes for *karuna rasa*. The illustration offered is that of Bhima killing and drinking the blood of Dushasana in the *Mahabharata*, which here is an example of Bhima's *krodha*, the *sthayibhava* that leads to *raudra rasa*. But the *sthayi* of *raudra* becomes the *vibhava* for *karuna* for others, and mourning in the Kaurava camp necessarily follows. In the same manner, *raudra* is followed as a norm by *bhayanaka*, and *shringara*, after the death of one of the two in love, is

necessarily followed by *karuna*. Even when both are alive but one is believed to be dead by the other, *karuna rasa* follows. The instance provided here is that of King Udayana who experiences deep *karuna rasa* on being erroneously informed that his beloved Vasavadatta has perished in a fire. In the same way *vira rasa* is followed by *bhayanaka*.

The third kind of relationship of transference is one in which one *rasa* is organised/structured with another *rasa* as its fruition. Thus the *vira rasa* may be depicted to find its fruition in *adbhuta rasa* (marvellous). *Raudra* always has as its *phal*, fruit, the destruction of the other and therefore *karuna* is never depicted as its fruit.

The fourth kind of transference/generation is when a *rasa* sharing the *vibhava*, etc., with another *rasa*, invites intervention of that *rasa*. The example that is provided is the *vibhatsa* whose *vibhava*, blood, etc., is the *vibhava* for *bhayanaka rasa* also. Similarly, its auxiliaries, such as dying, delusion, unconsciousness, etc., and its *anubhava*, such as twisting/contracting one's mouth and lips are the auxiliaries and the *anubhava* for *bhayanaka rasa* also. This is an example of co-mingling, *sahabhava*, of *rasas*. Four *rasas* appear as *akshepas*, interventions – *karuna*, *adbhuta*, *shringara* and *bhayanaka*.

All the above examples of *rasa*-transference are subsumed under *karya-karana bhava* and can be grouped under four principles of transference – *anukarana* (resembling, being similar), *karya* (effect), *phala* (fruit) and *akshepa*

(co-mingling, intervention). The four base *rasas* – *shringara*, *vira*, *vandra*, *vibhatsa* – are, each according to its substance, directed at the four ends of life – *artha*, *kama*, *dharm*a, and *moksha*. These are the eight *rasas* and if *shanta* is included, there are nine *rasas*.

Abhinava proceeds then to explain Bharata's statement about the colour (*varna*) of *rasas*. Each *rasa* has a colour, and the explanation for this takes us into the psychological-cultural dimension of *rasa* theory. Thus *shringara* is *shyama*, the colour of Lord Krishna. Is this so because Krishna's love for Radha is the proto-paradigm of love? Or because, when, in the monsoon season, the dark clouds inhabit the skies, our hearts turn to love? Or, is love a "dark" emotion? Perhaps all three. *Hasya* is white, *karuna*, of the colour of pigeons, dull blue, while *raudra* is red. *Vira* is effulgent saffron, *bhayanaka* is dark (black), *vibhatsa* is indigo blue and *adbhuta* is yellow.²⁴ These colour-*rasa* associations are connected with rituals of worship, and in drama, these colours acquire semiotic value when used in the backgrounds and in the costumes of the characters. *Shanta rasa*, however, is not counted here, Abhinavagupta says, but those who believe in *shanta* refer to the last part of the forty-third Bharata *karika* and say that the ochre colour of Vishnu/Krishna is the colour of *shanta rasa*.

Abhinavagupta now examines the specifically cultural marking of the different *rasas* in the form of presiding deities. Each *rasa* has a presiding deity,

²⁴ The psychic and cultural foundations of colours and *rasas* need to be explored and understood in more detail.

the deity that best illustrates/embodies the *rasa*. For success in evoking a particular *rasa*, on the stage or in *kavya*, the presiding deity of the *rasa* is offered prayers (*pooja*). Vishnu, in the form of *kamadeva*, is the lord of *shringara rasa*. The group of playful followers who serve Shiva are the deities of *hasya rasa*. Rudra, one of the eleven forms of *Shiva*, is the deity of *raudra rasa*. Rudra is the destroyer of the three worlds and is the one who impels Yamaraja, the deity of death, to kill mortal beings. Yamaraja therefore is the deity of *karuna rasa*. Mahakala, another form of Shiva, is the deity of *vibhatsa rasa* as he is supposed to inhabit the cremation grounds. Kala,²⁵ yet another form of Shiva, is the deity of *bhayanaka rasa*, which shares its *vibhavas* with *vibhatsa*. Mahendra, Indra, as king, a known warrior-god, is the deity of *vira rasa*. Brahma, who is *achintaya*, not amenable to mental reflection, one who cannot be perceptualised, is the deity of *adbhuta rasa*. Again, it is noted that Bharata does not mention the deity of *shanta rasa*. Abhinavagupta says that, according to some, Buddha, a man of knowledge always preoccupied with the welfare of others, is the deity of *shanta rasa*.

Notice that Shiva in his three forms is the deity of three of the eight *rasas* – *raudra*, *vibhatsa*, and *bhayanaka*. Shiva is the lord of dance, music and language, and therefore is a deity for all the arts. Also notice that *shanta rasa* is not part of the core theory. And yet, it is pervasive in Indian thought and popular thinking:

we always talk of the *nava rasas*, nine *rasas*, and the portrayal of these nine *rasas* forms the substance of Indian art.

Abhinavagupta concludes this part of his exposition by remarking that no more needs to be said about the generation of one *rasa* from another or about the colour and the governing deities of the different *rasas*. As *rasas* are mutually contingent on each other, nothing definitive can be said about the interchanges of *rasas*, and as the Vedas are the authority for the colour and deity of each *rasa*, no more exposition is required.

V

In the next part of his study, Abhinavagupta examines how the *rasas* are characterised by distinguishing them from one another, identifying their special attributes in the process. He begins by saying that before one separates members of a class from each other by *vishesha lakshana* (specific characteristics), one has to separate the class from other classes by *samanya lakshana* (general characteristics). We will consider here only Abhinavagupta's characterisation of the *shringara rasa*.

The first question Abhinava asks is: why is *shringara rasa* mentioned first in Bharata's enumeration of the *rasas*? What is the reason for this primacy? *Shringara rasa* is mentioned first because it is the *phal* (fruit) of *kama*, one of the *purusharthas*, and it is dear to all human beings. In the prose that follows,

²⁵ *Kala* is time and suggests the decay and death of everything with the passage of time. *Mahakala* is the cosmic time in which the entire universe hangs: both are forms of Shiva. While *kala* is associated with mortal beings, *Mahakala* is cosmic.

Bharata expands on the idea:

In these (*rasas*), *shringara rasa* arises from, and is directed towards the *sthayibhava*, *rati*. It is bright-apparelled (*ujjwal veshatmaka*).

Whatever in this world is auspicious (*shuchi*), pure (*medhya*), luminous (*ujjwal*) and worthy of being seen/cognised (*darshaniya*), is designated/ named *shringara*. Just as people are given names on the basis of parental or maternal traditions or worldly usage, the elements of *natya*, *rasa*, *bhava* and others bear names given by wise sages on the basis of tradition and function.

Abhinavagupta asks next: as *rasa* is something to be experienced, and not sensory, how does one understand its description as *ujjwal veshatmaka* (bright apparelled, luminous)? *Shringara*, he says, is shown to be ornamented by beauty, an element of visibility, and at the same time, its similarity to auspiciousness and purity, non-material qualities, is laid down. How does one establish coherence between these two?

In other words, the use of the word *shringara* appears non-coherent. Abhinavagupta says that this is a case of extended usage (of the word *shringara*) on the basis of non-difference between the object of comparison (*upameya*), *rasa* in this case, and the object with which it is compared (*upamana*), "the bright apparel" here. These extensions come about through the convention of word-use by teachers or thinkers in the tradition. Technical terms from the

shastras, Abhinavagupta points out, are similarly extended to acquire non-technical signification. Abhinava illustrates this with the example, among others, of the Samkhya term *purusha* that stands for the active, alert, "energy" principle, but which is used in common usage to refer to "man." He says that the word *shringara* is primarily used for *rasa*, but in worldly usage, *loka*, its use for "bright apparelled," for example, is *aupacharika*, a convention of usage.²⁶

But more importantly, Abhinavagupta interprets these words to define the nature of experience denoted by *shringara*. He says that in life a person who experiences *rati* develops a weakness for the object of his desire, the beloved. But this is transient and does not endure for long. So, only the experience born of *rati* that is worthy is called *shringara*. To be worthy, the *vibhavas* have to be worthy. In the *shastras*, Abhinavagupta points out, everything that is non-proscribed (*anishidha*), not condemned (*anindita*) and attractive to the heart (*manohara*) is denoted by the word *shringara*. So the *bhava* has to be "bright-apparelled," "luminous," "sublime," for it to be denoted by the word *shringara* – not something just ordinary or vulgar. As Bharata has said, whatever is auspicious and pure is *shringara*.

So, *shringari*, the human experience of love, *rati*, is necessarily "sublime:" it cannot be merely physical, a bond that seeks physical gratification. Nor can it be a transient bond if it is to be sublime. It is necessarily a bond that lasts forever: *chirasthaya pratiti*. It is an emotion that

²⁶ Abhinavagupta shows that the efforts to etymologically derive the word *shringara* to explain its meaning are misplaced as the word cannot be derived by any rules and has to be treated as an idiosyncratic form generated by Panini's sutras, designed for such idiosyncratic forms and called *Unadi sutras*.

arises between a man and a woman of "superior nature." By "superior nature" is meant a high degree of sensitivity, a refined sensibility (*samvedana shakti*). If it is not mutual, and if it is merely momentary physical desire, it is *rati* no doubt but not one that will evoke *shringara*. As a momentary experience, it can only be an auxiliary state (*vyabbicharibhava*), not a *sthayibhava*. Abhinavagupta explicitly says:

The momentary sexual attraction between a non-superior or non-young man and woman is not designated as *rati* or *shringara* because only the long-enduring attraction inherent in *rati* is called *shringara*.

Further, the *rasa* experience begins the moment a proper conjunction of *vibhavas* presents itself and does not wait for any "fulfillment" to be achieved. Hence, *shringara* is experienced even when the lovers are separated. In fact, there are two states of love – union and separation – and in art, the highest form of love-experience – *shringara* – is one where the joy of being together is laced with actual or feared separation. So it is in life too. There is one difference however: what is an actual experience in life is only a *manasika bhavana* in art. It is all an enactment, an image-making. The auditor cognises the experience and this cognition (*anubhuti*) itself is *rasa*. But in a way, it is not really different. The observer in life is the auditor of art and the process of *rasa* experience is the same for both.

One final doubt remains to be clarified once again. *Rasa* theory is articulated from the point of view of the auditor (*samajika*). It is the auditor who experiences *rasa*. But this *rati*-founded *rasa* is basically in the *anukarya*, in the object(s) of representation. In life also it is the same: the observer experiences what empathetically he observes happening to others. So, is the auditor's/observer's *rasa*-experience different from that of those whose experience is being enacted, the *anukarya*, from that of the objects of observation? The answer is: no. Though the substrata differ, the experience with all its factors is the same for the *anukarya* (the object of representation) and the *samajika* (the auditor). The true *rasa*-experience arising from a special conjunction (*ekaviyoga*) of the experiencer and the auditor allows for no *bheda* in the *rasa*-cognition of the two.

The primacy of *shringara* has been argued at length by Bhojaraja who argues that since every human action emanates from self-love, love, *shringara*, is the source-*rasa*. Bhoja was trying in his own way to understand the significance of Bharata's placing *shringara* first in his enumeration. Both *vatsalya* and *bhakti*, which, it was later argued, were independent *rasas*, are in fact modulations of *shringara*. In the philosophic tradition, *kama* is one of the ends of life and is denotative of desires including the physical.²⁷ Sexuality has been recognised as the most powerful human drive and its deleterious effects on personal relations and social cohesion

²⁷ In social life also, Indian thought seeks to regulate sexual desire through self-restraint and by restricting sex to marriage for purposes of procreation. "I am the sexual desire that leads to procreation" says the *Bhagavad-gita* (10.28).

have also been clearly understood. Indian thought therefore seeks to bridle sexuality, and Indian aesthetics, thus, governed as it is in other cultures by the community's world-view, defined and articulated *shringara rasa*, the state of being in love, as a *chirasthayi pratiti*, an enduring state of being, and not one that would naturally come to an end with physical fulfillment. There is no doubt that the paradigm is *rati*, love between a man and a woman, but it is interpreted as no different from the relationship between man and his god in *bhakti rasa*. For what is common to both is reverence or adoration of the object of love – even in human love, the lover wishes only the best for the beloved, his affection being directed towards the welfare of the object of his love and necessarily involving complete self-denial. It is a state of two souls becoming one so that it does not matter whether the two are together or not. There is a kind of purity, a beauty born of selflessness and total surrender of the self, that characterises what is popularly called “true love.”

Abhinavagupta thus explains at length the nature of love, *shringara* (ABh on the NS 6.34-40). The four ends of life govern the aesthetic experience of different states of being, particularly love, joy, courage and wonder. The experience born of *rati*, physical attraction, that is “effulgent” and “worthy of reverence,” is called *shringara*, love. “Whatever in this world is pure, effulgent and worthy of being seen or experienced is compared to *shringara*, love,” says Abhinava. Born as it is of attraction for the other person and dear as it is to the heart of man, its

chief marker is *kama*, desire. The object of desire, the beloved or the lover, is called *shringari*. The intoxication of the person who has a weakness for the source of that desire, though actually experienced in life, does not last for a long time. So the impulse towards a worthy object is called love. In intellectual texts (*shastra*) and in the world, whatever is un-proscribed, un-condemned, and beautiful (that which captures the mind) is subsumed under *shringara*, but in art it is restricted to the worthy state generated in a worthy person by his desire for a worthy object. In art, it is the representation of this desire rid of its grossness and mere physicality that creates an effulgent and ennobling experience. It is the experience of ultimate union (*param bhoga*) of two worthy (*uttam*) persons of deep sensitivity mutually lost in each other. It is only then that the mutual love is enduring, *chirasthayi pratiti* – if it were not so, the sexual fulfillment would terminate it. *Shringara* is endless desire and endless fulfillment.

Abhinava harmonises this concept of love with his own transcendental metaphysics. Breathing, he says, is only an apparent sign of life in a human being; the real spring of life is love. It is in itself fulfillment, it does not have fulfillment outside itself; gross sexual fulfillment in fact terminates it. He goes on to argue that the primary, originary psychological state is the *shanta rasa*, the peace that pervades the self, and all states are subsidiary to this, for the ultimate goal of life is liberation from suffering, and that comes from renunciation, a selfless renunciation. Love therefore is an act of renunciation,

worship, an act of devotion and reverence, for only an object of reverence is beautiful. Such love is true, pure and beautiful. Such is the legendary love of Radha and Krishna. This entire philosophy of love and life is enshrined in the perennial narrative that celebrates the love of the village girl, Radha, and the extraordinary cowherd Lord Krishna, the apogee of which can be found in that extraordinary twelfth-century poem, *Gita-govinda* by Jayadeva.

Sringara rasa has two states (*avastha*): union (*samyoga*) and separation (*vipralamba*). Abhinavagupta notes that in union there is fear of separation, and in separation there is hope of union. In this way, the beauty of *sringara* rests in the co-mingling of the two, *samyoga* and *vipralamba*. The *vibhava* for the two is also the same. But the same *vibhava* can lead to *samyoga* and *vipralamba*. *Vipralamba*, separation, since it involves grief, comes very close to *karuna rasa*. The two share auxiliary states such as *chinta* (painful reflection) etc. What, then, separates *vipralamba sringara* from *karuna rasa*? For one, *shoka*, grief, is the *sthayibhava* for *karuna*, while for *sringara*, the *sthayibhava* is *rati*. And the separation of the lovers in *vipralamba sringara* is not irreversible, and there is always an element of hope of union. But in *karuna rasa*, separation on account of death, etc., is irreversible and there is no hope – instead there is *nirapekshabhava*, a certain detachment and helplessness indifference. Deep grief, the *sthayibhava* for *karuna rasa*, arises from what is called *shapa* or *shrāpa* – a curse from which there is no escape and that leaves no room for its counter. A deep helplessness overpowers those

experiencing it, leading to deep grief, and if it happens to two persons in love, then the *rasa* is *karuna*, not *sringara*.

VI

Although, as we have noted in section 4, that Bharata does not specify the colour (*varna*) and the deity (*devata*) for *shanta rasa*, yet in his prose comment following *karika* 83 of the *Natyashastra*, he gives an exposition of *shanta rasa*, discussing it separately from the other eight *rasas* because, in his understanding, it is above and beyond them in that he considers the state of *shanta rasa*, a deep peace and harmony in the self, as the *prakrita*, natural or given state, of man, a state into which all of us are born, and all the *rasas* are seen as *vikaras*, deviations from that state, and life itself is a constant struggle to regain that original state. Also, he is aware of the controversy surrounding *shanta rasa*, that every one does not accept *shanta* as a *rasa* because, according to them, it does not fall into the structure of the *rasa*-theory.

Abhinavagupta in his exposition of Bharata's *karikas* argues elaborately and convincingly that *shanta rasa* must be accepted as a separate, ninth *rasa*. The following is the structure of *shanta rasa* as schematised from Bharata prose comment:

Generator of *moksha* (deliverance from the here and the now) and spiritual self-realisation (*adhyatama-sakshatkara*), informed by *tattvajnana* (knowledge of what is), instrumental in the realisation of *moksha*, the *rasa* called *shanta* is the ninth *rasa*.

This *shanta rasa* should be understood as that which is

attainable by those who have mastered the senses of knowledge and of action and as that which promotes the happiness and well-being of all living beings.

Where there is no sorrow, no joy, no envy, no jealousy, that state of equanimity in all beings is well-known as *shanta rasa*. (NS ka. 84, 85-88)

Next, Bharata lays down his key principle, the one with which all the arguments of Abhinavagupta end:

The *sthayibhavas*, such as *rati*, of all the *bhavas* are kinds of *vikara*, deviations, and *shanta rasa* is the natural state (*prakritirupa*) of all of them. *Vikara*, deviant/marked states (*rasas*), take birth in that base of *shanta rasa* and in the end are absorbed in that itself.

With the means/instruments (*vibhava*) etc. becoming available, *rati*, etc., states (*bhava*) take shape in the *shanta rasa* and when the means are no longer present, they are re-absorbed in the *shanta rasa*.

In this manner those who know dramaturgy accept nine *rasas*. (NS ka. 87 and 88)

But many scholars do not accept *shanta rasa* as a *rasa* and give a number of arguments:

1. *shama*, the proposed *sthayibhava*, and *shanta* are synonymous;
2. only forty-nine *bhavas* have been enjoined by the *acharyas*: there is no room for the fiftieth, *shama*;
3. *vibhavas* such as the spring season and flowers for the *shringara rasa* are cognisable as causes for the consequent *rasas* but austerity (*tapa*) and self-restraint (*svadhyaya*) are not

cognisable in the state of *shanta* or *shama*;

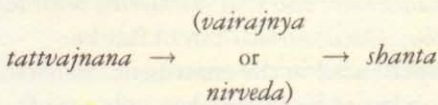
4. *shanta rasa* cannot be incorporated in drama because it cannot be acted as *shama*, the *sthayibhava*, means cessation of action, of all effort;
5. *dhriti* cannot be an appropriate auxiliary for *shanta rasa* as it stands for the satisfaction that follows the enjoyment of objects of the senses;
6. a person who is stabilised in *shama* will not make any effort, not even for gaining *tattvajnana* (knowledge of things as they are), which is a necessary preliminary for abstinence from action.

Abhinavagupta starts with a general argument: just as the cognitions (*chittavrittis*), such as *rati*, which are instruments in the promotion of the three ends of life are made experientiable as *rasas*, the cognition, *chittavritti*, which promotes the fourth end of life, *moksha*, should also be made experientiable as *shanta rasa*, and that *chittavritti* with its *sthayibhava*, *nirveda* can in fact be experienced in the enactment. So *shanta rasa* has to be accepted as a matter of general principle. But the central problem remains: what is the *sthayibhava* of *shanta rasa*? Three positions are available in the tradition:

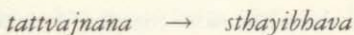
1. the most widely accepted position is that indifference/detachment, *nirveda*, is the *sthayibhava*;
2. each of the eight *rasas* function as *sthayibhavas*, and
3. all the eight *rasas* together function as the *sthayibhava*.

Abhinavagupta reports a prolonged controversy about *nirveda* as the *sthayi*

for *shanta rasa*. *Nirveda* is the first of the *vyabbicharibhavas* and as such can function both as *sthai* and *vyabbichari*. Secondly, *nirveda* supercedes all the *sthaiyibhavas* in that it means the end of all *bhavas* and therefore *nirveda* born of proper knowledge (*tattvajnana*) is to be accepted as the *sthai* of *shanta rasa*. The problem with this view is the inter-relationship of *tattvajnana*, *vairajnya*, *nirveda* and *moksha*. As proper knowledge, *tattvajnana*, is the cause of *vairajnya* and *vairajnya* is the cause of *moksha*, the cause of the cause cannot be the *vibhava* for *moksha/shanta*. It is also said that the causal order is different: it is *vairajnya* that leads to *tattvajnana*, which is the same as *nirveda*. That is, proper knowledge, *tattvajnana*, is the effect (*karya*) not the cause (*karana*) of *vairajnya*, which is the *sthai* for *shanta rasa*: it is seen in life also that those who have knowledge renounce things. Thus the causal relationship proposed is:



But Abhinavagupta says that this kind of detachment or *vairajnya* is itself in fact the highest form of knowledge, quoting Patanjali, who said that this highest form of knowledge is itself the highest kind of renunciation or detachment (*Yogasutra* 1.16). Therefore, not *nirveda* but *tattvajnana* itself is the *sthai* of *shanta rasa*:



The *nirveda* that is said to result from *tattvajnana* is a kind of regretful indifference towards a life-long

experience that is now seen as a mere illusion. The argument that *nirveda* as the end of false knowledge is the same as *vairajnya* is countered by the assertion that *nirveda* and *vairajnya* are two different things – *nirveda* is the extension of a cognition amounting to grief (over the fact of having been driven by illusions) while *vairajnya* is the end of all *bhavas* of involvements. But *vairajnya*, in this structure of argument, cannot be clearly accepted as the direct cause of *moksha* as it appears in the middle of the chain (see Figure 2).

Further *nirveda* (or *vairajnya*) born of *tattvajnana* is the same as *shama* and therefore *shama* should be accepted as the *sthai* for *shanta* (as Bharata has indicated). The original objection that *shama* and *shanta* are synonymous is now dismissed on the grounds that even in the original theory, the *sthaiyibhava* *hasa* generates the synonymous *hasya rasa*. In any case the "object-means" distinction (*siddha-sadbhaka*), with one of them being ordinary (means or *sthai*) and the other extraordinary (*alaukika*, the *rasas*) imposes the necessary differences between the two.

The second view claims that all the eight *sthaiyibhavas*, *rati*, etc., when they are evoked by extraordinary *vibhavas*, lead to an extraordinary cognition (*anubhuti*). Thus each one of them can function as the *sthaiyibhava* for *shanta rasa*: for example, nourished by man-woman relationships, etc., *rati* is the source of *sringara*, and when nourished by thoughts and discussions of *adhyatama*, the same *rati* is the source of the spiritualised self. Thus when one is stabilised in love (*rati*) for one's inner self (*atma*), then it becomes a means of

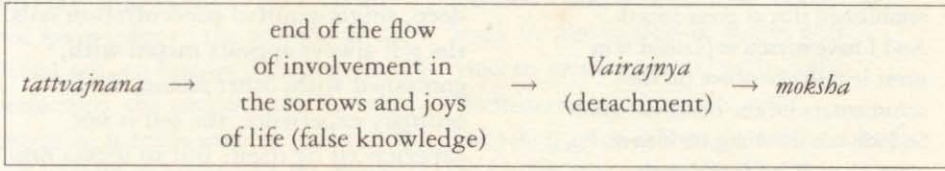


Figure 2

moksha. As the *Bhagavad-gita* says, "One who is involved only in the inner self experiences joy only in the *atma*; he is left with no duty to perform" (3.17).

In the same way, extraordinary causal experience (*vibhava*) can make each of the other *sthayibhavas* the *sthayi* for *shanta rasa*. Examples of these extraordinarily evoked *sthayibhavas* are *hasa* arising from an awareness of something wanting in all the objects of this world; *krodha*, anger, arising from finding all the world hostile to the well-being of *jiva*; *utsaha* arising from seeing life as an endless source of knowledge; *bhaya* upon feeling helpless in this overwhelming world; *jugupsa* from finding ill-will and ugliness and developing distaste for it, and *vismaya*, wonder, upon seeing everything and everyone as an image of one's self or of the universal self. It is noted that Bharata does allow for extraordinary *vibhavas* by adding *adi*²⁸ etc., to his statement of the *vibhava* for each *sthayibhava*.

As the *sthayibhavas* of all *rasas* can function as *sthayis* for *shanta rasa*, it is not possible to determine just one *sthayibhava* for *shanta rasa*. But this will also lead to different kinds of *shanta rasa*, which militates against the

accepted theoretical position in the theory that *rasa* is *akhandā* (indivisible, undifferentiated).

According to the third position, all the *sthayibhavas* together function as the *sthayis* for *shanta rasa*, as is the case with all the ingredients in the taste of a cooked dish. But this position too appears invalid because all the *chittavrittis* cannot co-occur together, and also because some of these, such as *hasa* and *krodha* (anger) and *shoka* (grief), are contradictory. So this view too is unacceptable.

What, then, is the *sthayibhava* of *shanta rasa*? Abhinavagupta now states his own view in a carefully-considered statement:

The first thing that needs to be said in this context is that *tattvajnana* is the means of *moksha*, and therefore it should be accepted as the *sthayibhava* of *shanta rasa*. *Tattvajnana* is the name for *atmajnana* (self-knowledge or knowledge of the self). Knowledge of the self (*atma*) as different from the knowledge born of the senses (*indriyajnanam*) is called *atmajnana*. This knowledge of that self, that is, being in the presence of one's self, *atmasakshatkara* or *tattvajnana*, is the *sthayibhava* of *shanta rasa*. My teacher, Sri Bhattatauta, has

²⁸ See, e.g., Bharata's prose statement on the *vibhava* of *shringara rasa* that follows ka. 45 in ch. 6 of the *Natyashastra*.

established this at great length. And I have myself explained it at great length elsewhere (in the commentary on the *Bhagavad-gita*). So I am not dwelling on it here. So, *atma*, the self, endowed with unalloyed properties (*vishudha dharma*) such as knowledge (and) joy (*jnana* and *ananda*) and devoid of the constructed "sense-object-experience" (*vishaya bhoga*, consumption/experience of objects of senses), takes the form of the *sthayibhava* for *shanta rasa*.

One may ask whether the self, *atma*, is not involved as the *sthayibhava* in other *rasas* as well, as the self is the experiencer. Abhinavagupta says that in the experience of other *rasas*, the self is not experienced in its autonomous, unalloyed form. The self, in those cases, is the substratum for the *sthayibhavas* of other *rasas*. But *tattvajnana*, the substratum for all *bhava*, is a more enduring *sthayi* than all the rest, and when it appears by itself as the *sthayibhava*, then *rati*, etc., the *sthayis* for other *rasas*, function as auxiliaries (*vyabbicharis*). It is self-validated (*swayamasiddha*). But as it is also the substratum against which other *sthayibhavas* constitute themselves, it has not been enumerated separately as a *sthayibhava*.

Then why enumerate *shanta rasa* separately? It is enumerated separately because it is an experience different from that of the other *rasas*. Moreover, the perception of the cognition of one's self (in *shanta rasa*) is not a matter of ordinary experience (*laukika pratiti*). In ordinary experience, and also when the

deep, single-pointed concentration fails, the self always appears mixed with, enmeshed with, other *bhavas*. So in ordinary experience, the self is not experienced by itself. But in *shanta rasa*, the self is cognised/experienced autonomously through extraordinary apperception. Hence, *shanta rasa* is enumerated separately.

Bharata does not designate this pure form of the self (*atmasvarupa*) by the words *shama* and *nirveda*. These two are specific *chittavrittis* – cognitions that take shape in the self, but are not the native self. So they are not the *sthayi* for *shanta rasa* – only the unalloyed self (*atmasvarupa*) is the *sthayibhava*. This unalloyed self that is grasped takes the form of *tattvajnana* or *samata* (peace, *shanti* or *moksha*). All the worldly, ordinary, and extraordinary cognitions become auxiliaries (*vyabbicharis*). The *sthayibhavas* of the other *rasas* also function as auxiliary (*vyabbichari*) *bhavas*. The experiences of *tattvajnana* in the form of control of the senses (*yama*) and discipline (*niyama*) function as the *anubhava* for *shanta rasa*. What Bharata terms *svabhavabhinaya*, natural enactment (NS, ch. 9, 10 and 11), also concerns *shanta rasa*. This *shanta rasa* is called *svabhava* (the native self), i.e., *shanta rasa* is native and natural (*svabhavika*); the other *rasas* are deviant/marked forms of this.²⁹ The blessing of and devotion to Ishvara (god) etc., are the *vibhava* for *shanta rasa* and in this *rati* (love) etc., are also experienced as they dissolve in the *shanta rasa*. Desire, effort and enthusiasm to do good to others is especially integral to

²⁹ As we said earlier, they are like storms in the sea of pure consciousness or like waves in a river.

shanta rasa. And because, after having gained knowledge of the self and of the universal self, no further duty remains to be performed, the *sadhaka*, the devotee-protagonist, is ready even to give his life for the welfare of others and his death, etc., is not contradictory to *shanta rasa*.³⁰ While for ordinary people protection of one's life is enjoined as the law, for the ascetics (*sannyasins*), protecting life is not the enjoined goal, for as Abhinavagupta puts it so beautifully:

Man's life is for the protection of *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (material well-being), *kama* (righteous desires) and *moksha* (deliverance). One who destroys them, what has he not destroyed (i.e., has in fact destroyed everything) and one who protects them, what has he not protected (i.e., he has protected all, everything).

One who gives up one's life for others, whether a soldier or an ascetic, is a *tattvajnani* and he gains *moksha*. Unlike the Vedantins Abhinavagupta says that those who have the right knowledge, *tattvajnana*, are able to attain *moksha* in every *asrama* of life and this has been said in *shruti* (Vedic literature) and *smriti* (technical treatises). Thus, Abhinavagupta says,

The *grihastha* (house-holder), given to offering prayers to gods, possessor of *tattvajnana*, treating guests with great respect, giving away his possession in charities after performing memorial service to his ancestors, also attains *moksha*.

The only difference is that those who work for the welfare of others with a view to gaining merit, such as the Bodhisattva, and possess right knowledge, are reborn, attaining a body and birth that is worthy of them.

That *shanta rasa* cannot be enacted or that there is nothing to enact in *shanta rasa* is no problem, as even in *shringara* in both its forms – union and separation – when it reaches its ultimate intensity, there is so much absorption in the heart that there is nothing external to enact. There is in such state *vyaparashunyata* (absence of action). The same *tanmayata* (total absorption) as marks the lovers' intensity also marks the *shanta rasa*. Just as the ultimate experience of *rati-shringara* is attained after all desires are quietened, in the same way, the ultimate experience of all *rasas* is not in the involvement with the objects of these *rasas* but in the indifference to or detachment from those objects. And as *shanta rasa* is born of detachment/indifference to all objects, it is the *prakriti*, the source substance, of all *rasas*. And since it inheres in all, it is general and therefore it is not counted separately, but for one who understands and has a discriminating intellect, the experience/cognition of the *sthayibhava* is something distinct.

The nine *rasas*, Abhinavagupta concludes, are listed in *Itihasa*, *Purana* and *Abhidhanakosha*³¹ and in the Pratyabhijna philosophy. This shows that philosophers and sages accept *shanta rasa*. Renunciation and giving up

³⁰ The Bodhisattva in Jataka stories gives away his life to protect other beings.

³¹ *Itihasa*: epics like the Mahabharata; *Puranas*: records of ancient events (there are eighteen major *Puranas*); *Abhidhanakoshas*: lexicons that list names.

the world are its *vibhava*. Reflection on *moksha-shastra* (texts dealing with *moksha*, like the Upanishads, etc.) are its *anubhava*, effects. Detachment, remembrance and contentment are its auxiliary *bhavas*. Therefore, *bhakti*, devotion/worship, marked by great effort directed towards the object of devotion (*ishvara pranidhana*), and informed by remembrance, contentment and joy, is a part of *shanta rasa* and, for this reason, *bhakti rasa* had not been enumerated separately. Enabled by *tattvajnana*, *shanta rasa* has, as its fruit *moksha*, the release from all the bondages of this life.

In the presence of their own specific causes, all *sthaiyibhava*s rise/form in the pervasive state of *shanta*, and when the *karana*, cause, the *nimitta*, instrument, is no longer there, they dissolve into the *shanta rasa* itself. So, Bharata, Abhinavagupta concludes, says that *shanta* is the source (*prakriti*) of all *rasas*.

VII

We have travelled with Abhinavagupta in his journey through the *rasa-siddhanta* of Bharata. In his exposition, Abhinavagupta underlines many important dimensions of Bharata's theory. It has been established that *rasa* is endowed with *jnana*, knowledge, and *ananda*, joy or bliss. This is the character of art-experience: it is a discourse of knowledge laced with bliss. *Rasa* itself is defined as a *chittavritti*, a state of consciousness, a cognitive state in which knowledge is inflected by bliss. And

knowledge enshrined and communicated in *natya* and *kavya* is valid knowledge, *samyaka jnana*. This is why Bharata uses the expressions *vedasammita natyaveda* (NS 1.4) (having the authority of the Vedas), *natyavedam* (NS 1.15, 16), and *vedam panchamam* (NS 1.12). This is a key theoretical position in Indian theory of art – that art, specifically verbal art, has, as a discourse of knowledge, the same status as the Vedas.

Abhinavagupta dwells on this in his exposition of the first chapter of *Natyashastra* and explains why *natya* is thought to have the authority of the Vedas. It is said that Bharata created the *natyaveda*. *Natyavedam* is a compound that signifies that the *Natyashastra* was constituted by Brahma, who drew upon the Vedas: the text (*patha*) and the thought is taken from the *Rg-veda*, music and song from the *Sama-veda*, performance (*abhinaya*) from the *Yajur-veda* and *rasa* from the *Atharva-veda*. *Natyavedam* also stands for ten kinds of plays (*Dasarupaka*). According to other commentators, *natyavedam* means: "Veda, as a deity of the universe of words, has taught what should be done and what should be given up, and accepting that as worthy of being taught through enactment, I (Bharata) shall expound the *natyashastra*."

Then Abhinavagupta admiringly quotes Bhatta Nayaka³² to give another, more profound and authoritative, interpretation of this statement:

That which Brahma presented as an analogy (*udaharna*), that is, that which has been made an

³² We are told that Bhatta Nayaka had expressed all these views in his book, *Sahridayadarpan*, a work no longer extant.

example/analogy to understand this *jagata* which is characterised by difference (*bheda*), constructed by (our) *avidya*, ignorance, and without substance (*sara*), I (Bharata) shall expound that.

In a play (about, e.g., Rama, Ravana, etc.) purely fictive/imaginative and therefore not stabilised in one given form, undergoing innumerable changes (in innumerable performances) and more extraordinary than even a dream,³³ yet drawing, attracting, the viewers' hearts, enacted by a Brahma-like *nata* (performer),³⁴ the Rama-Ravana action becomes wondrously perceptible. And even as such, it becomes a means for attaining the *purusharthas*, the ends of life. In the same way, this *jagata* is also an unreal (*asatya*) name-form construct (*asatya nama-rupa prapanchatmaka*) and yet through experience and meditation (*shravana, manana*) it is instrumental in the attainment of the ends of life. And through the enactment of the ultimate end of life, *moksha* it facilitates *shanta rasa* also.

Abhinavagupta again quotes Bhatta Nayaka on this world itself being a *nataka*, a play:

My obeisance to the great poet Shankara (Lord Shiva) because people inhabiting the world experience *rasa* in this *jagat-rupa-nataka* (play in the form of all this world) structured/composed by him.

For the reason that *natya* is an analogue of this world and instrumental in the instruction of Vedic values, the reader or the auditor of drama gains the same

end/fruit as the scholar of Vedas or a charitable house-holder. Like the Vedas, *nataka* also instructs in *kartavya/akartavya*, duty and what is not duty. The varied characters enacted through various *rasas* manifested in the enactment enter the hearts of the auditors and generate an intellect conducive to actions that promote the four ends of life and an intellect that abstains from wrong-doing.

Therefore, because *natya* like the Vedas imparts instruction (*upadesha*), it is referred to as a "Veda," but, nevertheless, it is different from the other Vedas. While not everyone can read and understand the Vedas – in fact most people are "afraid" of such serious, intellectual texts as the Vedas, *shastras* and *puranas* – *natya* is addressed particularly to everyone, such that the people can, along with enjoyment, also gain serious ideas just as patients swallow medicine more easily when it is dissolved in milk. But it is pointed out that *natya* is for scholars as much as for the *mandamati*, non-intellectuals. The knowledge that the knowledgeable acquire from the *shastras* is reinforced by *natya*, while for the ordinary people, *natya* makes knowledge palatable.

This status of *natya* assumes that the knowledge enshrined therein is valid and categorical: why else would the auditor unquestioningly accept it? Evidently as this knowledge is communicated through enactment that is witnessed, seen, by the auditors, the experience enacted has the status of actuality (*sakshata*). Therefore, the

³³ Being more concrete, being more visual than a dream, though equally fictive.

³⁴ Brahma is the creator; so is the *nata* a creator.

knowledge that is grasped from *natya* has the status of perceptual knowledge, knowledge born of direct perception, *sakshatakaratmaka jnana*, and as such it has a definite validity. There are two kinds of knowledge: knowledge of the present (*aparoksha*), and of the absent (*paroksha*). The first is knowledge born of perception (*pratyaksha*) and the other is born of other means such as words, inference, etc., and may be called *parokshajnana* or indirect knowledge. Indirect knowledge does not satisfy people: even when they gain indirect knowledge, they want to make it actual, and they want to "see." That is what drama does. It actualises the knowledge of the non-present. And *pratyakshajnana*, knowledge born of direct perception, is most valid. *Natya*, therefore, generates valid (*samyaka*) knowledge.

But what about *kavya*, narrative literature (as against the dramatic)? In such compositions, *shabda*, language, is the only means of knowledge, and *shabdikajnana*, knowledge produced by language, is *parokshajnana*, indirect knowledge, knowledge of what is not present. As such, what is its validity?

Abhinavagupta notes that the poet has the creative ability in language to make objects virtually "real" in the sense that the auditors almost "see" and "hear." After all, the process of denotation involves mental imaging on the part of the hearer/reader as Bhartrihari had established elaborately in

the *Vakyapadiya*. In a way, all cognitive processes, not just verbal comprehension, involve mental imaging. Even in direct perception, comprehension is of the mental image of the object. And in dream-consciousness, there is a mental image related in indefinable ways to some remembered, recalled, or experienced object. Similarly, the word also evokes a mental image. Thus all the three modes of cognition are alike:

- The word "horse" evokes a mental image and is grasped as such.
- The actual "horse" is grasped as a mental image (in effect, no two persons cognise an identical horse).
- The dream "horse" is again grasped as a mental image.

So the reality of cognition is in the mind of the cogniser. Or, more precisely, every object exists as it is present to our inner self – *atma-pratyaksha* as the Jaina thinkers call it. Thus, *pratyaksha* is not what is present to our senses but what is present to our inner self, and therefore, all the three cognitions listed above have equal validity. Therefore, in substance, there is no difference between *shabdikajnana* and *pratyakshajnana*, and *shabdikajnana* (verbal knowledge) is also *pratyakshajnana* (knowledge born of direct perception). Hence, literature (verbal art) is a discourse of valid knowledge.

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Abhinavagupta's Integral View of Aesthetic Concepts¹

K. Krishnamoorthy

I

IT IS WELL-KNOWN THAT virtually all aesthetic concepts – *rasa*, *guna*, *alamkara*, *bandha* and *vritti* – were familiar to all literary theorists from Bharata down to Jagannatha. But as each of them had his own way of defining, classifying and illustrating these, it often led to lopsided emphasis on one perspective at the cost of the others.

Anandavardhana sought to remedy this in his *Dhvanyaloka* (DL), but it is Abhinavagupta, who, in his two major works, the *Lochana* and the *Abhinavabharati* (ABh), shows, with a degree of finality, how exactly to integrate every concept into a unified philosophy of beauty in literature and art. Unfortunately, misreadings, and thence, mistranslations of Abhinavagupta's work in important contexts, as well as lost portions of his oeuvre, have hindered even the best of our scholars from engaging correctly with crucial portions of his thought.

This paper establishes correct readings, on the testimony of unpublished manuscripts, for a few specimen passages of Abhinavagupta's work, and shows how Abhinavagupta was a thinker who went beyond even Anandavardhana and Bhatta Nayaka in his theory of aesthetics, and how he is the first in Indian poetics to attempt to explain the precise parts assayed by each aesthetic concept in a given poem or play.

The late K. Krishnamoorthy was a renowned Sanskrit scholar who published, among others, the first ever critical editions of the *Dhvanyaloka* and the *Vakroktijivita* with complete English translations. The range of his scholarship encompasses almost the entire corpus of ancient Indian literature, from the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavad-gita*, to the works of Bhartrihari, Kalidasa and Shankara, to name only a few. His translations of over fifty classics of Sanskrit poetics and literature into Kannada won him the State Sahitya Academy Award.

¹ Editorial note: The late Professor Krishnamoorthy's contribution, as submitted, was clearly targetted at Sanskritists and, more so, at those already familiar with classical literary theory. This was evident not just in the amount of Sanskrit terminology left untranslated – including entire passages – but technical concepts taken for granted. To make the paper more accessible to non-specialists, these Sanskrit passages have been translated. All translations, unless otherwise specified, have been made by Sunthar Visuvalingam.

II

We usually take for granted the meanings of such key terms as *śabda*, *artha*, *bhava*, *rasa*, *bandha*, *guna*, *lakṣhaṇa* and *ālamkāra* without any serious thought about their deeper implications or relative status. A close study of Abhinavagupta can bring remarkable clarity to our vague theorisings.

Let us start with *śabda*. This term does not refer to mere sound, or even to mere units of spoken language such as syllable, base, affix, word, phrase and sentence. *Śabda* is these and something infinitely more in poetry. It is the whole poem that is heard by the outer ear in recitation or the inner ear in silent reading. A poem is, essentially, an organised or patterned linguistic sound-symbol: *vācya-vācaka-samīśraḥ śabdātmā kāvyaṃ iti vyapadeśyaḥ ... dhvanir ityuktaḥ*, as Anandavardhana would say (DL 244). If Bhartṛhari speaks of *śabda-brahman* (logos), Anandavardhana's all-comprehensive aesthetics refers to all poetic language as *dhvani*. Only through the use of this concept, and in this sense, can poetic language be differentiated from the other uses of language – the empirical and the scientific. *Dhvani* is thus primarily *kavya-viśeṣa* or *śabda*. Its differentia, or "soul" (*ātman*), is its *pradhana-vyangyārtha*, "primary suggested meaning."

Artha or "meaning," again, does not signify the dictionary meanings of particular words or even the direct import of individual sentences or

paragraphs or whole works. The word *artha* does not signify "sense" or meaning as is commonly understood. Instead, it refers to aesthetic value alone. As Abhinavagupta rightly points out:

*Koḥ kavater vā kavanīyaṃ kāvyaṃ.
Tatra ca padārtha-vākyaṛthau raseṣu
eva paryavasyataḥ ity asādhāranyāt
prādhānyāc ca kāvyasyārthaḥ rasāḥ.
Arthyante prādhānyenety arthāḥ. Na
tv artha-śabdo' bhidheyavācī, kim tu
prayojana- vācī.*² (ABh 1: 343)

The term *kavya* (poem) is derived from the activity (*kavanīyam*) denoted by the verbs *-ku* or *-ko*. Here, because the word meanings and the sentence meanings culminate in the *rasas* only, the meaning of the poem is (actually) the *rasas*, for the latter is both unique (*asādhāranya* = "uncommon") and primary. "Meaning" (*artha*) is that which is primarily "sought after" (*arthyante*). The word "*artha*" here does not refer to the denotative meaning, but rather signifies the intended purpose (*prayojana*).

This is a view oft-echoed in the *Lochana*, where, for example, while commenting on *kavyārtha* (DL 1: 7) Abhinavagupta says: *kāvyasya tattva-bhūto yo'rthaḥ*. The *Kaumudi* clarifies it further thus:

*īha sarvatra artha-śabdo nābhidheya-
vacanaḥ,
sva-śabdābhidheyatvasya nirastatvāt.
Kim tu arthyate prādhānyena ity
arthaḥ,
vācasyārthasya tam prati sarvathā
paryavasānāt.* (DLL 172)

² Citation from the second edition of the *Abhinavabharati* in the *Natyashastra of Bharatamuni*, with the Commentary by Abhinavagupta, ed M. R. Ravi, (Baroda: Gaekwad Oriental Series, 1956); earlier editions read "sa" instead of "na."

The word *artha*, wherever it occurs here, does not mean denotation, because the possibility of its being direct denotation (of suggested meaning) by the word has already been refuted. Rather, the "meaning" (*artha*) is that which is primarily "sought after" (*arthya*), because it is the invariable culmination of the explicit meaning of the sentence.

In this integral view, *rasa* alone is the meaning of the poem (*kavyartha*) and *kavya* is *shabda* intended by the poet to result in *rasa*. Such a creative use of *shabda* or *dhvanana-vyapara* indicates the genius of the poet (*kavi-pratibha*) on the one hand, and the sensitive imagination of the reader (*pratipattr-pratibha*) on the other, which can go beyond the referential meanings of a poem:

Tac-chaktitraya (ābhidhā-lakṣaṇa-tātparya-śakti-traya) -upajanita – arthāvagama-mūla-tat-pratibhā-pavitrita-pratipattr-pratibhā-sabāya-artha-dyotana-śaktiḥ dhvanana-vyāpārah. (DLL 117)

The process of suggestion is the power to illuminate meanings aided by the reader's intuition, which has been purified by (repeated) insight based on understanding the meaning arising from these three powers (of denotation, figurative meaning and import of the whole sentence).

Thus understood, the evocative power of a poem itself becomes *dhvanana* or *dhvani*, a power *sui generis* to poetic language as such. The form of a poem is termed its *śarīra* or body, and the unique value-content, *rasa*, its soul or *atman*.

Rasa is the focal point towards which all elements of formal beauty, such as figures of speech (*alamkara*) and poetic qualities (*guna*), converge. All aspects of poetic content, like the prosaic subject matter (*vastu*), owe their entry into the portals of poetry entirely to their ability to serve as the means of conveying *rasa*, visualised first by the poet at one end, and which is then intended to be actualised by the connoisseur (*sahridaya*) at the other end. The story, the characters, the style of a poem all contribute in their own way in leading to the aesthetic experience that is *rasa*. Therefore poetic content or *artha*, even when considered objectively, can be envisaged only in relation to *rasa*. Hence Abhinavagupta rightly regards all objective content of poetry as coming under the category of *vibhavadi* (the objective configuration of determinants, ensuants, transitory feelings, and suchlike that evoke *rasa*). Any object in the natural world, or of the world of the poet's imagination (even if it be non-existent in terms of the tangible world of reality) is grist to the poet's mill if it partakes of the power to induce *rasa* in the reader by becoming a *vibhava* or stimulant, *anubhava* or ensuant, and *vyabbhavaribhava*, or accessory of an emotional nucleus (*sthayin*), which alone has the capacity to be transmuted into *rasa*. The requirements upon the poet's arts of plot-construction and characterisation, as well as diction and style, are determined thus by the singular norm of "appropriateness with regard to *rasa*" (*rasauchitya*), which is purely and exclusively aesthetic and entirely amoral. Thus, the scope of the

term *rasa*, considered objectively, is extended to include its semblances (*abhasas*) and variations in intensity (*udaya, shanti*) and admixtures (*shabdālata*) with other emotional shades as well. Emotions described may be either permanent ones (*sthayi*) or transitory (*vyabhichari*). Both are *bhavas* because they are mental states described in poetry. The former alone are regarded as *rasas* proper, such as, for example, *shringara* (the erotic), while the latter are designated only as *bhavas*. Though aesthetic experience or *rasa* as such is an undifferentiated (*akhandā*) experience of bliss, within the heart of the reader, its *vishaya* or the referential counterpart in the poem, that is to say, the pivotal emotion around which all descriptions revolve as *vibhavadis*, may include eight or nine distinguishable *rasas*, and thirty-three distinguishable *bhavas*. In short, poetic content (*kavyārtha*) is distinguished from prosaic content (*śāstrārtha*) only by reason of its *vibhavadi-artha* converging to a *rasa* or *bhava* which immediately evokes aesthetic experience in the sensitive reader. All this and much more is suggested by Abhinavagupta as early as the initial verse of his *Lochana*:

*apūrvam yad-vastu prathayati vinā
kāraṇa-kalām
jagad grāva-prakhyam nījarasa-
bharāt sārāyati ca
kramāt prakhyopakhyaprasava-
subhagam bhāsayati yat
Sarasvatyāḥ tattvam
kavi-sahyodayākhyam vijayate.*

Victorious is the Muse's double
heart,
the poet and the relisher of art,
which has created brave

new worlds from naught
and even stones to flowing sap has
brought,
imparting beauty to all within its
reach
by successive flow of genius and of
speech.

III

We are able to envisage the comprehensive significance of key terms like *śabda, artha, lakṣaṇa, guṇa, alamkāra, dhvani, rasa, bhava, vastu* and *auchitya* only because of Abhinavagupta's integral approach, as a systematic philosopher, to poetic theory.

Explaining the art of composing poetry (*kavya-bandha*), he states that just as an engineer interested in building a palace starts by levelling the ground, designing the layout, raising the walls, with room for windows, and so on, so too the starting point for the poet at work is the selection of the proper words and verse-forms (*lakṣaṇas*) (NS 15.227).

Interesting aspects of plot constitute the walls, *guṇas* and *alamkāras* serve as paintings decorating the walls, while literary genres are like lovely windows, and so on (ABh 2: 292). Later on, he clearly mentions that the poetic process itself has been variously named by different theorists, and that *bandha, qumpha, bhaniti, vakrokti, kavi-vyāpara* are all synonyms (NS 322). We can thus easily see how *riti* is synonymous with *bandha* and *dhvani* with *kavi-vyāpara*. Thus, the seeming diversity of opinion among literary theorists is reconciled and unified by Abhinavagupta's integral approach. Abhinavagupta spells out his philosophy thus:

yathā paramātmā *sva-caitanya-*
prakāśam atyajann api deha-
kañcukocita-citta-vṛtti-rūpitam iva
svarūpam ādarśayati, ... preṣaka-
pakṣe na natābbimānaḥ, tatra
rāmābbimānaḥ iti darśayati. tathā
naḥ'pi. Etad-āśayaiva asmābhiḥ
tatra tatra pratītir eva vyākhyātā
rasādbhyāyādau. (ABh 3: 124)

Just as even God might choose to play the role of man, conditioned by mental states, limited by the human body, without losing his illumined self-awareness, so too an actor plays the role of characters without shedding his individuality. Therefore, throughout our exposition, we have interpreted *rasa* only as an experience (*pratīti*) of something as it appears.³

Art is an appearance or illusion that can lead to real bliss: that is the magic of *rasa*. Acting (*abhinaya*) in drama and description (*varnana*) in poetry are illusions devised skilfully to evoke the self-experience of joy:

Abhinayanam hi citta-vṛtti-
sādhāraṇatāpatti-prāṇa-sākṣātkāra-
kalpa adhyavasāya-sampādanam.

(ABh 150)

Theatrical representation (acting) amounts, indeed, to conveying (to the spectators) a determinate perception whose experience is wholly life-like and whose essence consists in their psychological states attaining to a state of "commonality" (*sadharanata*).

The secret of the alchemy of art-experience is unerringly highlighted as *sadharanatapatti*. This is very often

wrongly understood as generalisation or universalisation by scholars. It is explained clearly as the "mutual merging (of individualities) through (a shared) commonality" – *sādhāraṇā-nyonyānu-praveśa* – in Bharata's extremely famous text:

pitā-putra-snuṣā-śvaśrū-dṛīyaṃ
yasmāt tu nātakam
tasmād etāni sarvāṇi varjanīyāni
yatnataḥ. (NS 31.299)

Bharata, to paraphrase the above passage, disallows kissing, embracing, sleeping, loosening of garments, and the like on the stage, because a play is an entertainment to be seen by a whole family, including one's father, son, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, and so on. A spectacle whose *rasa* can be shared with every member of the family without any embarrassment, is spoken of as having *sādhāraṇānyonyānu-praveśa*, as being commonly shared entertainment. If, in a scene, the elders or ladies cannot participate freely, one should take it as an instance of *rasa-bhanga* or "breach of *rasa*."

Tataś ca raso bhajyeta. Sa hi
sādhāraṇānyonyānu-praveśa-prāṇaḥ iti
pratipadam vadāmaḥ. (NS 225)

And therefore one should be ever mindful of *rasa*. We emphasise at every step that the latter has for its lifeblood the mutual merging (of individualities) through (a shared) commonality.

It is indeed a mistake to think that poets and critics have identical tastes. The

³ Editorial Note: The translation is from Ingalls, et al, *The Dhanyaloka of Anandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta* (43).

adage “*loko bhinna-ruchi*,” to each his own taste, is true in the world of literature also. To satisfy equally all readers with diverse tastes, poets embody diverse *rasas* and *bhavas*. As Bharata says, *na hy eka-rasa-jam kāvyam kimcid asti prayogataḥ, bhāvo vāpi raso vāpi*, or, there is verily no poem that is in practice born of a single *rasa*, neither an emotion nor its aesthetic equivalent (NS 7.119 and 1: 379). But the resultant joy or delight in the readers is common, though the factors that lead up to it might be different from reader to reader. It is this aspect of *rasa* as a common communal or social entertainment that is emphasised by the term *sadharanikarana*.

The stimuli of *vibhavadis* in plays and poems are common to all spectators and readers. And hence the *rasa* arising from their contemplation also is experienced freed from personal feelings arising from locating it either as one's own, or another's, as a friend's or a foe's or a neutral person's, at any given time or place. The *rasa* of fear that is felt on listening to the verse *Grīvābhāṅg-ābhīrāmam* from *Shakuntala* is fear, pure and simple, freed from all limitations of time, place, subject and object:

*asyām ca yo mṛga-potakādīr bhāti,
tasya viśeṣa-rūpatvābhāvād ... bhayam
eva param deśa-kālādy-anālīṇigitam,
tata eva bhīto'haṁ bhīto'yaṁ
śatrur-vayasya-madhyastho vā ity-
ādi-pratyayebhyo duḥkha-sukhādi
kṛta-bhānādi-buddhy-antarodaya-
niyamavattayā vighna-bahulebhyo
vilakṣyaṁ.* (ABh 1: 279)

The young deer is not a particular deer. It is a symbol of universal fear, irrespective of time, place, and

circumstance, man, bird and beast. This is another kind of *sadharanikarana* that is neither idealisation nor generalisation in a reasoned manner. The emotion aesthetically contemplated and enjoyed as *rasa* is neither objective nor subjective but symbolic of one's own emotion as well as of all others seeing the same *vibhavadis*. And:

*Sva-sambandhitvena anyā-
sambandhitvena ca sādharanyāt
pratītaiḥ abhivyaktībhūto
vāsanāmatayā sthitaḥ sthāyī pānaka-
rasa-nyāyena carvyamāṇo ...
rasa-rūpatām āpnoti.* (cf. RAS 252.)

Being made manifest by perceptions that are common (i.e. neutral), as regards being related to oneself or to someone else, the underlying permanent emotion remains in the form of its latent trace to be relished according to the maxim of the concocted beverage (*rasa* – where the flavour of the whole is distinct from those of its ingredients) ... thus it attains to the state of *rasa*.

If it is not acceptable to a wide public, but appeals only to a microscopic minority at any given period, the poem or play may be deemed to be a failure.

The concept of *anauchitya*, “impropriety” or “flawed *rasa*” (*rasa-dosha*) is clearly pinpointed here. The secret of classical literary works is that they can appeal to large sections of cultivated readers, transcending the boundaries of time and place.

IV

It follows as a corollary from the above that ethically offensive features and evil

are to be located only in villains whose ultimate annihilation at the hands of heroes representing good can be widely appreciated. This is one of the reasons for the absence of tragedy in Indian literature. Heroes may be of several kinds, *udatta* (high-minded), *uddhata* (fierce), *lalita* (gentle), *shanta* (appeased), and so on, but they all share the common quality of *dhīratva* or nobility. As Abhinava says, "*sarveṣv eva nāyaka-bhedeṣu dhīratvam eva viśeṣanatayoktaḥ*" (ABh 3: 158).

Abhinava also provides, for the first time, a rationale for the dictum that the ruling *rasa* in a major work must either be *shringara* or *vīra*: this is because, according to Abhinava, the best in women is represented in love, while the best in men is brought out in their heroic exploits for achieving goals of national or universal importance: "*Strīṇāṃ uttamatvam śṛṅgāra-rasa-paryantam eva; puruṣāṇaṃ tu vīra-rasa-viśrāntam*" (ABh 3: 153).

V

Abhinavagupta popularised the use of the term *hrīdaya-samvāda* for empathy, to explain aesthetic psychology. This word, however, figures, still earlier, in Bharata's text.

*yo'rtho hrīdaya-samvādi
tasya bhāvo rasodbhavaḥ.
śarīram vyāpyate tena
śuṣkham kāṣṭham ivāgninā.* (NS 7.7)

But Abhinava's commentary on this portion is lost: he quotes it in the

Lochana without any explanation. Fortunately, an unpublished commentary on the *Lochana* by an anonymous commentator,⁴ cited here, provides Abhinava's explanation, presumably basing itself on his lost *Abhinavabharati*. Many other citations therein expressly state the name of this source; though here it is just implicit:

arthah = vibhāvādirupah. Hrīdaya-samvādi = hrīdaya-tanmayī-bhavana-śilāḥ ity-arthah. tasya bhāvaḥ = udayah, athavā bhāvo camatkārah; rasodbhavaḥ = rasotpatti-sthāna-bhūtaḥ. Tena śarīram = arthāt śrotuḥ vyāpyate, śrotur-hrīdaya-vyāpti-pūrvakam śarīram api vyāpyate. Eka eva hi śarīre pulakādy-udayah.

"Meanings" = the configuration of the *vibhavas*, etc. "Resonating in the heart" = whose heart is adept at identifying (with the objective configuration). "Its state" = arising, or otherwise (its) "state" (meaning) relish; "emergence of *rasa*" = the occasion for the arising of *rasa*. "By it the body" means the listener is pervaded: through the listener's heart being pervaded, so is the body pervaded. Within the same body (there arises joyous) horripilation, etc.

Kaumudi, the published commentary, is similar (see DL 78). This long extract has been reproduced here because its exact meaning has not been conveyed by modern translators of Bharata, like Manmohan Ghosh, whose translation reads:

The psychological state proceeding from the thing which is congenial

⁴ Unknown Author, Ms. 7471, Adayar Library, Madras, 181. The author of this manuscript says he hails from Dasarathi-kola.

to the heart is the source of the sentiment and it pervades the body just as fire spreads over dry wood.

It should have been:

The presence or contemplation of a *vibhava*, capable of finding a ready echo in the responsive heart of a connoisseur, becomes an immediate stimulant of *rasa* or aesthetic experience. One's whole frame becomes suffused with it like dry wood that has caught fire.

And it also shows how, in Abhinava's integral aesthetics, *bridaya-samvada* or *tanmayibhavana* (sympathetic identification) is an essential constituent of the appreciation of *rasa* (*rasasvada*). Incidentally, it dovetails deftly into his scheme the concepts of *guna* and *alamkara* also. Those who think that Abhinavagupta underrated the traditionally recognised beauties of *guna* and *alamkara* are misinterpreting him. The term *vibhava* is semantically related to the evoking of *rasa*; yet its occurrence in poetry is only by way of the medium of language, which is made poetic only by a proper use of *gunas* and *alamkaras*. This patterned structure of poetry is called *sanghatana* or *rachana* or *bandha*; and the figurative turns that adorn *vachaka-shabdas* and *vacyarthas* are the *alamkaras*. That is why the *vibhavas* and the like are all regarded as supernormal (*alaukika*) in their structure as well as in the end-value of *rasa*. If the experience (*samvedana*) of *rasa* is not immediate, then they cease to be *vibhavadis*. This is why *rasa* is described as *dhvani* that is "suggested without any perceptible (time-) sequence (upon grasping the expressed meaning)" (*asamlakshya-krama-vyangya-dhvani*).

VI

The same anonymous commentator on the *Lochana* provides another long extract from the *Abhinavabharati* on Bharata's verse (*arya*), describing the heroic sentiment (*vira-rasa*):

*utsābhādhyavasāyād aviśāditvād
avismayāmohāt,
vividhād artha-viśeṣād vira-raso
nāma sambhavati.* (NS 6.67)

From the determination of energetic enterprise, from the absence of despondency, bewilderment and delusion, as also from (the depiction of) various distinct objects (of pursuit), what is called the heroic sentiment arises.

This portion is not traceable in the present printed edition:

*tatrāmunaḥkṛtāṃ vyākhyānam:
arthayate ity arthaḥ (karmaṇi ghaṇ) =
dharmādi catur-vargaḥ.
Karmavyutpattyaiḥ hi
dharmādayaḥ puruṣārthaḥ ity ucyante,
puruṣenārthanīyatvāt. Artha-viśeṣasya
vividhatvaṃ dharmādi-bhedāt. Tad
ayam arthaḥ: Vividham = dharmādi-
rūpam artham abhisandhāya
aviśāditvāt avismayāsammoḥaś ceti
dvandve ekavad-bhāvah. Avismayād
asammohāc ca hetor yo'dhyavasāyo
niścayaḥ sa cotsāhayati iti nijantāt
pacādy-ajantatvena vyutpattyā
utsāha-betuḥ. Etad uktam bhavati.
Āpadi brdayasya nimagnatvaṃ tat-
para-vaśatvaṃ viśāditvam. Svalpe'pi
saṃtoṣo vismayaḥ. Mithyā-jñānam
mohaḥ. Etat trayam apāśya yas
tattva-niścaya-rūpo'dhyavasāyaḥ sa
utsāha-betuḥ. Evaṃ ca viśāditvādi-
trayāpāsana-pūrvakam-udbhūtena
adhyavasāyena hetunā ya utsāha
utpadyate sa vira-raso nāma iti.*

(Adayar Ms. 95-96)

Here the commentator has provided the following gloss: "meaning" (*artha*) is that which is sought after = the four-fold goals of life beginning with morality; the *purusharthas* are so called because they are "sought after" (*arthaniya*) by "humans" (*purusha*). These meanings/objects are manifold because of the distinctions between and within *dharma*, etc. So this is the meaning: having determined various meaningful objectives in the form of morality and so on, there is absence of despondency resulting in non-bewilderment and non-confusion, the (association here of the latter two qualities in a verbal) compound being expressive of their union. This is what has been said: "Despondency" is the drowning of heart when beset by calamity resulting in dependence on others. "Bewilderment" is the condition of being satisfied with a pittance. "Delusion" is false knowledge. The determination consisting in the correct ascertainment of reality arises when these three (states of mind) are cast aside and it is the cause of energetic enterprise. In this way, the enthusiasm that arises, having determination as its cause when these three beginning with despondency are cast aside, is none other than the heroic sentiment.

How Abhinavagupta clearly integrated the pursuit of recognised life-values or *purusharthas* under *vira-rasa*, and how great literature was thus set in clear relation to life as inculcating right attitudes (covertly though!) is self-evident in this extract. There are a number of such extracts untraceable in

the text of the *Abhinavabharati* currently available in print. We can say that only great literature combines this didactic purpose, because Abhinava clearly states that there are minor literary forms like the monologue play (*bhāna*) whose goal is simply *ranjana-phala*, popular entertainment (Adayar Ms. 67).

I would like to conclude by stating that Abhinavagupta is the foremost thinker to integrate, for the first time, virtually all the disparate concepts of Indian poetics into a well-organised aesthetic philosophy. This aspect of his contribution has not received sufficient attention in modern scholarship of his theory of *rasa* in general and of *śhanta rasa* in particular. The anonymous commentator's mouthful of praise is worth another quotation:

*Eṣa hi vyākhyātā Nārāyaṇa
ivāparimeya-śakti-śālī, mūla-
grantham kṣīra-sāgaram iva
gambhīram nijam atibalena
mandareṇeva nirmathya tatra
nigūḍham artha-viśeṣam pīyūṣa-rasam
iva sphuṭaḥ prakāśamānatām ānīya
vibudhair āsvadyamānaṁ vidadbāti.*

(Adayar Ms. 204)

This is indeed a commentator (Abhinavagupta) endowed with boundless ability, for powerfully churning the authoritative source text – as if he were *Narayana* (Lord Vishnu) himself churning the (primordial) ocean of milk with Mount Mandara to extract the nectar of immortality – he brings to the clear light of day hitherto deeply hidden extraordinary interpretations and offers them freely for the delectation of the learned connoisseur.

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Some Problems in the Translation of Sanskrit Poetry¹

Daniel H. H. Ingalls

AN EXACT TRANSLATION IS possible only within the context of mathematics and the exact sciences. "Two and two make four," "*Deux et deux font quatre*": that is exact. Outside this area, even in the simplest situations, a translation can be only approximate. "Be good," "*Sois sage*." "*Sois*" fails to cover the area of "be;" we need "*soyez*" at least in addition. "*Sage*" covers an area quite different in outline from that of "good." The most that we can say is that in a given situation – say, when warning a small daughter not to throw food on the floor – the second phrase, if rendered in the same tone of exasperation or patience, will produce the same effect on a French daughter that the first will produce on an American. To produce the same effect is generally the goal of translation and I shall discuss the difficulties of achieving it before coming to a case where it is not enough.

To produce the same effect becomes more difficult as we move from expository to emotional speech, as we move from prose to poetry, and as we choose to deal with pairs of languages that differ in structure and in cultural heritage. It follows that Sanskrit poetry is not easily translated into English. The problems that one encounters are illustrated in a volume now being edited in the Harvard Oriental Series.² It is a translation of two of India's most influential works of literary criticism,

Daniel H. H. Ingalls' (1916-99) pioneering Sanskrit scholarship produced several extremely influential books. Materials for the Study of Navya-Nyaya Logic (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1951) opened up the study of this fascinating form of philosophy for non-Indian scholars, as did his renowned translations of an important early twelfth-century anthology of Sanskrit poetry, Vidyakara's Subhitaratnakosa (ed. and trans., Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965), into English, and his final major publication, the translation, with Jeff Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, of the Dhvanyalokacana (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990).

¹ This essay is reproduced, with minor editorial corrections and by permission of the author and publisher from the Translation special issue of *The Harvard Advocate* 3.4 (Summer 1982): 125-31.

² This volume has since been published: *The Dhvanyaloka of Anandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta*, trans. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, edited with an Introduction by Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 49 (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard UP, 1990).

Anandavardhana's *The Light of Suggestion* (*Dhvanyaloka*), written towards the middle of the ninth century, and Abhinavagupta's *The Eye* (*Lochana*), a commentary on the former work written a century and a half later. Both works adduce a large number of Sanskrit and Prakrit poems as examples to bear out their literary theories. They explicate the poems in great detail and analyse the causes of the beauty that they find in them.

The Light of Suggestion and *The Eye* furnish the translator with both more help and more problems than he will find in other Sanskrit literary works. More help because one is shown exactly how a Sanskrit critic, in an age and environment close to that of the poet, understood each poem that is quoted. More problems because, the poems being quoted for their aesthetic flavour, one must try to capture the same flavour in English; and yet, if one departs more than a small distance from the literal sense of the words, the prose explication by the critics will be rendered unintelligible to the reader.

An example will make my meaning clear. Among the linguistic traits that distinguish Sanskrit from English is its ability to form enormous noun and adjective compounds. This trait is brought up for discussion by Ananda and Abhinava. Previous critics had associated the trait with a "quality" of poetry they called "strength" and which they opposed to a quality called "sweetness," which was to be achieved by an inflected, non-compound structure. Ananda, although he objects to this opposition as oversimplifying the matter, gives us an example where

compound structure is clearly productive of strength. The example is taken from a play, *The Binding of the Braid* (*Veni-sambhara*), which deals with the oath of Bhima (his name means "the Terrible") to break the thighs of Suyodhana and drink the blood from Dushasana's breast, these being the warriors who had insulted his queen, Draupadi. They had dragged her through the Kuru court by the hair. After this insult Draupadi has left her hair hanging in a braid, which she will not bind on her crown until she has been avenged. The play treats this plot of vengeance with a rhetoric of violence worthy of Lucan and such as we have preserved for us in no other Sanskrit play.

Here is the stanza Ananda chooses:

cañcad-bhuja-bbramita-cañdi-
gadābbighāta-
sañcūrṇitoru-yugalasya Suyodhanasya
styānāvabaddha-ghana-sonita-sona-
pāṇir
uttamśayisyati kucāṁs tava devī
Bhīmāḥ

A literal prose rendering would be:

In despite of the by-my-whirling-
arm-held-brutal-
club-stroke-crushed-thigh-pair-
possessor Suyodhana,
I, Bhima, a congealing-adhering-
thick-blood-reddened-
hand-possessor will deck the hair
of you, my lady.

What is a translator to do with such a stanza? To adhere to the original structure will drive his reader to confusion or laughter, an effect of which one must be ashamed, for in the Sanskrit

the stanza is not confusing or comical; it is clear and passionate. One can of course attain these ends by such means as we would normally use in English to produce a feeling of strength and passion. But if the translator departs too far from the literal, the comments of the critic – and these are what have prompted our whole effort in this work of translation – will make no sense. What the translator must do is find a satisfactory compromise.

In the Harvard Oriental Series edition the stanza is translated thus:

The brutal war-club whirling in
my arms
will crush both thighs of this
Suyodhana,
so that he whose name is truly
Bhima
may deck your hair, my lady, with
his hands
new-reddened in that fresh-
congealing blood.

The translation is followed by Abhinava's explication and criticism:

With this "brutal," that is, cruel, war-club which will be wielded by my "whirling" arms, that is, arms circling with great speed; with this war-club both thighs will be simultaneously "*sañcūrṇita*," that is, completely crushed so that the man cannot stand up again. I shall so despise Suyodhana, whose thighs are in this condition, that I will become one whose hands are "reddened," crimson, with the blood that is "thick," that is, does not run off because it comes from a deep wound and is not the thin liquid of a superficial cut, and which will stick to my hands because it is "congealing,"... there

not having been time enough for it fully to dry. It is for just this reason that I shall be "Bhima," that is, one who strikes terror into the hearts of cowards. "Your" hair: of you, to whom so many insults were given – "my lady" shows how little deserving she was – I shall deck the hair, that is, I shall change it from its braided state and give it, as it were, a coronet of red flowers with bits of blood falling from my hands. Here we have an implied figure of poetic fancy (*utpreksha*). By using the vocative "my lady," which reminds us that a noblewoman was humiliated by Suyodhana, the author has applied a stimulus to the relish of anger. Accordingly [in spite of the reference to a normally amorous act, the decking of a beloved's hair], one cannot suspect any suggestion of the relish of love. There is both despite of Suyodhana and an absence of effort to strike him again with the war-club because his thighs will have been completely crushed with the one blow. The use of the word "congealing" suggests Bhima's impatience to wash away the grievance of Draupadi before the blood even dries. From the long compound, flowing in an uninterrupted stream and allowing the hearer no pause in all its course, there results an apprehension of the whole representation of the broken-thighed Suyodhana. This serves to intensify the impression of Bhima's violence.

The genius of Abhinava as a critic appears in the last two sentences here. It is the unity of a representation furnished by a compound that gives it its strength. The whole scene is before our eyes as soon as we understand the words at all. We are not allowed to dilute the effect

by relishing it bit by bit. It hits the aesthetic sense not like pebbles but like a rock. The Romans achieved somewhat the same effect by abandoning normal word order, so that an adjective, say, given as the initial word of a line or strophe, will not find its noun, and so be intelligible, until the last word.

I admit that all our effort here does not quite give the reader the effect of the original. We have in our translation of the stanza no "uninterrupted stream that allows no pause in all its course." But given the compromising translation – we do use two unusual compounds in the last line – and the critic's comment, the reader is in a position at least to understand, if not fully to relish, what appealed to the reader of the Sanskrit verse.

A comparable problem, though one that is not peculiar to the translation of Sanskrit, is that of giving English the effect of the particular metre of the original. English metre is accentual. Sanskrit metre, like that of Greek and Latin, is quantitative. There have been in English, of course, many imitations of quantitative verse, even a few successful ones, like Milton's wonderful rendering of the Fifth Ode of Horace. But even Milton would have had to make large compromises in translating Sanskrit. Take the following stanza, included by one edition in the text of our Ananda. Beside the Sanskrit text I furnish the metrical scheme.

madana-mukhara-kaṭaṭam
unmayūram *uuuuuu-u-u- -*
pravirala-vāmana-vṛkṣa-saṃniveśam
 uuuu-u-u-u-u- -
vanam idam avagāhamāna-bhīmam
 uuuuuu-u-u- -

vyasanam ivopari dāruṇatvam eti

uuuu-u-u-u-u- -

A literal prose version would be:

With intoxication-voluble doves,
 with rising peacocks, containing
 few and dwarfed trees, this forest,
 dangerous to enter, leads like vice
 to dire misery.

This is not great poetry, but it attains a striking effect, as the commentator notes, by its use of *aupacchandasiṅga* metre. There is a contrast between the happily tripping short syllables of the line openings and the heavy cadences, which is nicely parallel to the contrast between the beauties of the forest (and of vice) as it first calls to the traveller and the heavy disaster that awaits him if he yields to the temptation and enters. Now one cannot lighten English verse to the degree of producing seven consecutive light syllables. But one can weight it and thereby achieve a contrast, at least, comparable to that of the Sanskrit.

With its enraptured doves and
 eager peacocks,
 this wasteland of sparse dwarfed
 trees
 is like human vice: tempting to
 enter,
 it bodes dire consequence.

Here again, the exact effect being impossible in English, one is forced to compromise.

Many verses from *The Light of Suggestion* and *The Eye* demand of the translator less alteration of structure than the examples just given. But before giving examples I must say something of the basic theories of criticism which

Ananda and Abhinava have set forth, by which they judge the poetry that they quote, and in light of which one must modulate one's English versions.

Like almost all Sanskrit critics Ananda and Abhinava regard the ultimate aim of literature as the production of aesthetic relish (*rasa*). Literature may also give information or instruction, but that is incidental. Instruction is primary only in the sciences (*shastra*), not in literature (*sabitya*). The exact nature of aesthetic relish and the means used in its production come in for much learned discussion and I shall here greatly simplify the outcome.

The term *rasa*, which basically means taste, was first used in a technical sense by actors and playwrights. Every play has its special taste or aesthetic flavour: comedy, love, tragedy, heroism, and so on. The old Sanskrit theatre spoke of eight such *rasas*, to which the later theatre added a ninth. These different types of *rasa* were distinguished by the basic emotion or state of the soul on which they were built: laughter, sexual excitement, sorrow, masterful energy, and so on. And yet, the relish was recognised to be clearly distinct from the emotion. The emotion belonged to the character portrayed on the stage, the relish to the audience. To produce a given relish one had to furnish not only the emotion and the character in which it seemed to reside, but also certain stimulating factors of environment, gesture, and the like.

The extension of this dramatic nomenclature to Sanskrit literature as a whole was in large part the work of our

ninth-century critic Anandavardhana. Every poem, whether lyrical, religious, or epic, every tale in prose or in mixed prose and verse, must have its predominant relish. An elaborate body of prescriptions arose regulating the combination of subordinate relishes with the predominant one. In addition, Ananda formulated the doctrine that these *rasas* must be suggested, that they could not be directly expressed. This suggestion (*dhvani*) of a relish, he claims, is the essence of beauty throughout the whole of literature. Hence the title of his work, *The Light of Suggestion*, for his criticism was intended to cast a light by which poets would be enabled to achieve and readers would be enabled to appreciate this most essential element of poetry.

Our critics analyse suggestion in all its aspects, including in the lower forms – those that do not produce *rasa* well as the higher. Suggestion may be generated by the words themselves of a poem, or by their meanings. It may arise from the poem taken as a whole, from a single stanza or sentence or word, or even from a single morpheme. A suffix denoting the plural or emphasising the second person may be suggestive. Figures of speech may be suggestive, or in turn they may be suggested. The manner of this criticism will appear from an example.

White herons circle against dark
clouds
that paint the sky with their wet
lustre.

Winds carry the small rain.
The peacocks, friends of the clouds,
cry out with joy.
Let all this be: my heart is hard;
I am Rama and can bear it.

But Vaidehi, how will she live?
Alas, my queen, alas, be brave!

The stanza evokes the relish of love in its sub-variety of love-in-separation, a variety that comes close to the relish of tragedy. Rama perceives the beauties of the monsoon, a time when lovers long to be together. One may point to the skill with which the stimulants of sight, touch, and hearing are combined in the first half of the stanza. In the second half, Rama contrasts his case with that of his wife, Vaidehi (Sita), who has been carried off by Ravana. The poetry recreates Rama's grief through suggestions that inspire something similar in the reader.

Abhinava finds numerous suggestions in the stanza:

And so the sky is painful to look at (as it reminds Rama of his love). All the directions are also hard to bear. The use of the plural in "winds" shows that they blow from all directions; and by releasing their small drops of water it is suggested that they blow very softly [and thus linger over one's body and make one all the more love-sick]. Then, perhaps, Rama should enter a cave and hide the sight from his eyes. With this in mind, the poet says that the clouds have friends, among whom are the peacocks who utter sweet sounds in their joy and so become reminders of the unbearable sight of the clouds. On their own as well, these sounds are quite unbearable. In this way Rama, whose emotion of love has been aroused by stimulating factors, knowing that these sources of emotion will pain Sita, since love is based on mutual feeling, from here on in the stanza

conjugates up his beloved in his heart. First he reports on himself: "Let this be. . . still I am Rama." The word "hard-hearted" gives scope to the particular suggestion that is achieved by the word "Rama." Without "hard-hearted" the word "Rama" might suggest no more than that the speaker was born in the family of Dasaratha, or that he had married Sita. As it is, "Rama of hard heart" suggests his fortitude in banishment from his kingdom and his other innumerable heroic qualities, which could not all be conveyed by a denotative, non-suggestive, use of words. Even if these qualities could be denotatively conveyed one by one, they would not be apprehended in a single act of cognition and would not give rise to a striking and beautiful aesthetic experience. As it is, these qualities are suggested and so do become the source of a strikingly beautiful aesthetic pleasure . . . "I am Rama:" that is, I am the self-same person who has undergone so many sorrows. "How will she live?" that is, what will she do? Or, the meaning can be taken as "her very life will be impossible." In this way, by a succession of memory, name (Vaidehi), and speculation ("how will she live?"), he has conjured up his beloved from his heart into being present before him. To her, as her heart is about to break, he says with agitation. "Alas, my queen, alas, be brave!"

What is difficult in such passages is to render the verse in such words that the comment following will be clear to the English reader. If you bracket each word of the verse with its Sanskrit equivalent and then repeat the Sanskrit equivalents in prose, you will not have translated;

you will merely have given the reader a crossword puzzle.

The relish we have seen of love-in-separation is one that covers a very wide area. It arises not only from situations where lovers or husband and wife have been separated by war or duty or some other turn of fate. It arises in cases of early love before the partners have had a chance to implement their emotion. It is found in lovers' quarrels. Most important, it is found in those cases where the man has been false to the woman and she rejects his efforts at reconciliation. Such a woman is called by the critics a *manini*, a woman of pride. What chiefly appealed to them in her situation, I think, was the tension between her pride ("I will not forgive") and her natural inclination ("I want him back"). A good example is quoted by Ananda from an unknown author:

Go away; nor try to wipe my
miserable eyes.
God must have meant them for
weeping only,
not for sight;
for they grew drunk on seeing you
and failed to show
what your heart was like.

The stanza is easy to translate, but the comment of the critic needs explanation. Ananda quotes the stanza as an example of the suggestiveness of the smallest possible part of speech, the suffix of the second person singular active imperative in the verbs "go" and "wipe." In normal Sanskrit or Prakrit, the polite form would be used, which would be in the impersonal passive, i.e. "let it be departed (by you)." The direct confrontation of "go away" is far stronger in Sanskrit than in English.

Before the ninth century, Sanskrit criticism and analysis of poetry had been chiefly concerned with figures of speech. Figures were divided into those of sound and those of sense, much as our classical rhetoric distinguished the *figurae verborum* from the *figurae sententiarum*. The Sanskrit word for all such figures is *alamkara*, "ornament." Ananda and Abhinava continue to be interested in the "ornaments," but they put them in their place, so to speak. Just as a physical ornament such as a bracelet or necklace is useful only if it heightens or emphasises the beauty of the person who wears it, so also with the ornaments of poetry. The soul of poetry is its aesthetic relish. To this relish the figures of speech must be subordinated. They must appear to arise naturally. For this reason Ananda disparages the elaborate alliterations that had been popular with earlier poets, especially the *yamaka*. The *yamaka* is the return of a set of phonemes in the same order but with different meaning, as in Kalidasa's

drumavatīm avatīrya vanasthalīm
descending (*avatīrya*) to the
well-treed (*drumavatīm*) woodland.

It is much the same trick that the Spanish poet Argensola used in his echoing sonnets, e.g.

Después que al mundo el rey divino
vino.

Ananda objects to it precisely because it is a trick. It catches the hearer's attention by its cleverness and thereby prevents his mind from feeling and contemplating the *rasa* which should be the true aim of the poem.

The same objection can be made to the overelaborate figures of sense. As an example of what to avoid, Abhinava quotes the lines

Opening by the stroke of her
beauty
the eyelash doorpanels of my eyes,
the princess entered the chamber
of my heart.

On the other hand, a metaphor properly subordinated may be seen in a stanza quoted from the anthology of Amaru:

In anger she has bound him
tightly in the noose of her soft arms
and in the evening leads him to the
bedroom.
There before her attendant friends
she points to the signs of his deceit
and conjures him
never, never to do such a thing
again.
O lucky lover! As he hides his
transgression with laugh,
she weeps and strikes him.

The stanza belongs to a type of Sanskrit verse which depicts a man's delight in an outburst of jealousy from his mistress, for jealousy shows the intensity of her love. "Her friends," says Abhinava, "have been telling her all along that her lover is faithful. Well, let them just look now. . . 'Never do such a thing again:' what she means is shown by the word 'deceit': for example nail marks left by a rival, to which she points with her finger." Of the metaphor Abhinava has this to say: "Were one to continue the metaphor of the woman's creeper-like arms acting as a noose for binding, the woman would become a huntress, the bedroom would become a prison or a cage, and so on, all of which would be

most inappropriate." Accordingly the poet has dropped the metaphor before it becomes obvious.

Not only figures of speech; everything must be subordinated to the *rasa*. The *rasa* of a poem or stanza must always be predominant. But now an embarrassing fact comes to the attention of the critics. Occasionally, and in what are admitted to be verses of the highest rank, a *rasa* itself seems to be subordinated. An example is:

Why do you laugh? You will not
get away again
now that I have caught you.
Pitiless man, what is this strange
love of travel
that drove you from me?
So speak your enemies' wives,
clinging to the necks of their
husbands in their dreams,
only to weep aloud when they
awake
to the empty circle of their arms.

The verse belongs to a much-used type of panegyric. A king is praised by innuendo, what is expressly stated being the utter misery of his enemies. We have here a relish of tragedy, though that is not the chief aim of the stanza.

Abhinava begins by explaining the verse.

As the appearance of a dream is similar to what one has experienced, a wife here sees her husband laughing in her dream. "You will not get away again," that is, now that I know your unfaithful nature I will not free you from the noose of my arms. This explains the "empty circle of their arms" later in the verse. It is only natural to scold a lover who is never received back. So she says, "Pitiless man," etc.

"Dreams:" the plural shows that this happens again and again.

He then turns to the problem of the *rasa*. Clearly the stanza has both the flavour of tragedy as it tells of the widowed ladies of the enemy and flavour of heroism as it implies the victory of the king who is being praised. What has in effect happened is that the first *rasa* has been turned into an *alamkara* (ornament, figure of speech). Abhinava says,

In the stanza the greatness of the king is beautified by our relishing the flavour of tragedy, the basic emotion of which is the sorrow stimulated in the wives of the enemy upon seeing the dream. The main purport of this sentence is not baldly stated, as for example, "You have killed your enemies." Rather, the purport of the sentence is beautified and the beauty is due to the expression of compassion. Just as an object, such a face, can be embellished by another object, such as the moon, for it appears with greater beauty by having the moon as its simile, so also a fact, or a particular emotional situation, can be embellished by a *rasa* used as a subordinate element. So what objection can there be to our using a *rasa*, like any other object, as an ornament (*alamkara*)? The matter is made more tasteful by the *rasa*. This is obvious.

The English reader may not find it so obvious. He may even find that a compassion for the widowed ladies lives on in his apprehension more vividly than any admiration for the king's heroism. Here we meet the problem of the different sensibilities of two different ages or cultures. The translator has no

magic by which to effect a sudden change in his readers' sensibilities; nor would he wish to have it. The most he may hope for is that the reader by long acquaintance will come to understand the foreign response and will not let it interfere with his enjoyment of the foreign literature as a whole.

Given our critics' doctrine that the flavour of a poem must only be suggested it follows that they find fault with a poem if it gives its suggestion away by directly stating the suggested fact. Such direct statement lowers the poem to secondary rank.

"That's where my aged mother
sleeps, and there
sleeps daddy, the oldest man you've
ever met.
Here sleeps the slave-girl worn out
by her chores,
and here sleep I, who must be
guilty
to deserve these few days absence of
my lord."
By ruse of such statements such as
these the youthful wife
informed the traveller of her intent.

The last two lines prevent the stanza from achieving erotic relish. On the other hand, the following stanza is found to be unexceptionable.

Don't block my way; move on, you
fool.
You are utterly shameless!
I cannot stay from my chores;
I have to take care of an empty
house.

An "empty house" is the conventional rendezvous of village lovers in Sanskrit poetry. Abhinava spells out the suggestion. "You are inexperienced to show your feelings where other people

are present. But there is an empty house that could serve as a rendezvous. That is where we should go."

Professor Masson has objected to the critical principle that all relish should be suggested, and I agree with his objection if the principle is to be applied to literature other than Sanskrit and Prakrit. I think of Western verses:

O wally, wally, gin love be bonnie
A little time while it is new!
But when 'tis auld it waxeth cauld
And fades awa' like mornin' dew.

Or

*Odi et amo. Quare id faciam fortasse
requiris;
Nescio sed fieri sentio et excrucior.*³

No one in his right mind would relegate these verses to a secondary rank of poetry. But Sanskrit poetry almost never speaks directly about the emotions in this fashion. It portrays the symptoms of love and hatred, it describes the gestures of a new love and a love grown old. It

leaves the reader to make the direct statement to himself in silence. Given the body of literature on which Ananda and Abhinava formed their theories, their insistence that relish of emotion and the emotions themselves should be no more than suggested seems to me not unreasonable.

Here there arises a problem that has often vexed me. I have said that generally the goal of translation should be to achieve the same effect as the original. But what is one to do when the whole beauty of the original depends on suggestions that are strange to English, on an allusiveness that is even unintelligible without annotation? The case is different from that of poems in compound structure or in *aupacchandāsika* metre which I adduced at the beginning of this paper. In those cases the inimitable, or only partly imitable, trait was an ornament of the verse, not its soul. Here the difficulty is more serious.

³ N. S. Gill translates the Latin poet Catullus thus:

I hate and I love. Why do I do it, perchance you might ask?

I don't know, but I feel it happening to me and I'm burning up.

Gill's analysis of the artistry of this verse at may be found at:

<http://romanhistorybooksandmore.freeservers.com/Lnsgill3.htm>.

Is *Chit* "Consciousness"? Hermeneutical Reflections on Translating Abhinavagupta

Ernst Furlinger

CHIT – USUALLY SYNONYMOUS WITH *samvit* – is one of the central terms of classical Indian philosophy; it is also one of the operative words of Abhinavagupta's Trika Shaivism, a central knot in the whole net of words and terms in his texts. This term – which at the highest level is beyond definition – can be defined as "the Absolute," "the Reality." It is one of the keywords of Trika, similar to *dao*, *wu wei* and *ziran* in Daoism. The translation of these words, which is at the same time a "translation of cultures" (Clifford Geertz), is therefore crucial for the understanding of the whole school. Usually *chit* is translated with the English word "consciousness" (or "pure consciousness," "absolute consciousness") or its equivalents in other languages. This expression became, meanwhile, akin to a descriptive title for the whole system of non-dualistic Kashmir Shaivism: as a result, a recently published introduction to this school bears the title "Everything is Consciousness" in its summary of the major principle of this system; as the author (an Australian disciple of Swami Muktananda) states: "Kashmir Shaivism is the study of Consciousness" (Shankarananda 15).

In this article I will question this customary standard translation – fully aware that this could seem like a recent version of the battles of Don Quixote or that of David against the Goliath of a respected convention of the translation-relation between *chit* and the English "consciousness." I am taking up this attempt only out of this conviction: if this fixed, hardened translation-habit could be loosened, it could open a fresh way of understanding Abhinavagupta and his school. At the same time, I am convinced that it is important to understand

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what happens in the background of this translation-process from the Sanskrit *chit* in a text of the Indian classical era to the modern term "consciousness," a part of European language.

What is *chit*? In its highest (deepest) aspect, Reality is *chit* (*samvit*) or *chit*-ness (*chaitanya*). Unlike Shankara's Advaita Vedanta, Abhinavagupta's Absolute is not only pure light (*prakasha*) and inactive (*nishkriya*). Rather, at the centre of Advaitic Kashmir Shaivism there is the Shakti-dimension of Reality as a whole: dynamism, vibration (*spanda*), creativity, activity (*kartritva*). Abhinava starts his main opus, the *Tantraloka* (TA), with the majestic first verse¹ that describes the "five faces" (*panchamukha*), the five main energies of the Divine/ the Real: *chit*, *ananda*, *iccha*, *jnana*, *kriya*.

May my heart completely shine
forth (*samsphuratāt*),
embodying the nectar of the
Highest (*anuttara*),
one with the state of emission
(*visarga*)
made manifest in the fusion
(*yāmala*) of the two:
the Mother, grounded in the
pure energy (*kalā*),
radiant in the ever-new
(*abhinava*) genesis (*śṛṣṭi*),
and the Father, whose nature is
full (*bharita*) and,
while hidden, shines through
five faces. (TA 1.1)

In the next verse he addresses not Shiva, but Shakti as Para ("the Highest"), characterised as *chit-pratibha*, which is,

on the microcosmic level, the enlightening flash of the highest "light" similar to the sudden flash of creative inspiration (*pratibha*); on the macrocosmic level, it is the evolutionary flash of *chit* in the open, empty space embodied by the phenomenal world (cf. TA 3.65f). Abhinavagupta also identifies *chit/samvit* with the Goddess (as the throbbing core of Reality) in the *mangalasloka* of his later work, *Paratrishika-Vivarana*: "I adore the one Goddess in the form of *samvit*" (PTV 2). Also, his chief disciple Kshemaraja clarifies the relation between *chit/samvit* (*prakasha*) and Shakti (*vimarsha*) in this way, as within the dense passage at the beginning of his short text, the *Parapraveshika*:

We adore *samvit* that shines (*sphurantīm*) in the form of the Paraśakti of the prime origin, the heart of the highest Lord who both consists of the world and transcends it. Here [in Trika] the highest Lord is certainly of the nature of Light (*prakāśātmā*), and the light is of the nature of *vimarśa*. *Vimarśa* is the name for the shining (*visphuranam*) which is the uncreated "I" (*akṛtīma-aham*) in the form of the universe, in the light of the universe and in the dissolution of the universe. If it were without *vimarśa*, then it would be without the Lord, lifeless (*jaḍa*). And this indeed is *vimarśa*: *cit*, *chaitanya*, the highest word (*parāvāk*) which arises from its own joy (*rasa*), independency (*svatantrya*), the

¹ In his commentary (TAV) on this verse, Jayaratha says that it contains the whole doctrine of Trika, which will be unfolded by Abhinavagupta in the course of the work (cf. TAV 2: 3). See the commentary of this important benedictory verse – the *Mangalasloka* also of Abhinavagupta's *Tantrasara*, *Paratrishika-vivarana* and *Malinisloka-varttika*, in Alexis Sanderson, "A Commentary on the Opening Verse of the *Tantrasara* of Abhinavagupta."

original glory (*aīśvarya*), the highest self (*paramātman*), doership (*kartṛtvam*), shining (*sphurattā*), essence (*sāra*), heart (*hṛdaya*), vibration (*spanda*) – with these and other words *vimarsha* is revealed in the Agamas. (PP 1f)

This identification of *chit* with Shakti – the creative, vibrating, shining core of Reality – is based on Utpaladeva's theology of recognition:²

If there were no Maheshvara who contains within himself all the infinite forms, who is one, whose essence is *chit*, possessing the powers of knowledge, memory and exclusion. (IPK 1: 3.7)

How to translate *chit*? The Sanskrit word is derived from the root *chi*, "to see, to shine." In 1872, Hermann Grassmann rendered the noun *chit*, in the context of the *Rg-veda*, with the German expression "leuchtendes Mächtigkeitsein" ("shining mightiness"). The translation "consciousness" is related only with the visual dimension of the root *chi*, while an interpretation of *chit* like "the Grand Shining," "the Light-Nature of Everything" would fit Abhinavagupta's theology of light. In fact, *chit* – with its integration of "seeing" and "shining" – represents at once the Light-Nature of the Absolute (the abyss of light, *prakasha*) and the

vimarsha-aspect (from the root *mrish*, "to touch, feel, be aware of"), the nature of the seeing, experiencing, touching of the untouchable Light by means of its untouchability.

In 1922, John Woodroffe, mentioned the problem of the untranslatability³ of the word *chit*:

The fundamental peculiarity of the Advaita Vedanta and therefore of its Shakta form is the distinction which it draws between Mind and Consciousness in the sense of *Cit*; a word for which there is no exact equivalent in any European Language. (v)

Woodroffe characterises *chit* as the

common source and basis of both Mind and Matter. *Cit* is the infinite Whole (*Purna*) in which all that is finite, whether as Mind or Matter, is. This is the Supreme Infinite Experience, free of all finitization, which is Pure Spirit as distinguished from Mind and Body. (v-vi)

Thakur Jaideva Singh, the renowned translator of many texts of non-dualistic Kashmir Shaivism into English, echoes him forty years later when he speaks about the untranslatability of *chit*. He states that he has translated it as "consciousness" for lack of a better word.

² See *The Ishvarapratyabhijnanārika of Utpaladeva with the Author's Vritti*, (Sanskrit text, p. 14; English translation, p. 103); Torella translates: "whose essence is consciousness...."

³ For the question of untranslatability, see Rainer Guldin, "The (Un)translatability of Cultures" (*Studies in Communication Sciences* 2 [2003], 109-134); L. Lane-Mercier, "Translating the Untranslatable: The Translator's Aesthetic, Ideological and Political responsibility" (*Target* 9.1 [1997], 43-68); Roger Hart, "Translating the Untranslatable. From Copula to Incommensurable Worlds" (*Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*, ed., Lydia Liu [Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1999], 45-73); Kaisa Koskinen, *Beyond Ambivalence. Postmodernity and the Ethics of Translation* [Diss., Acta Universitatis Tampereensis, Tampere: Tampere UP, 2000], 774).

But he clarifies that "*chit*" is not "consciousness:"

The word Con-sciousness connotes a subject-object relation, knower-known duality. But *Cit* is not relational. It is just the changeless principle of all changing experience. It is *Parasamvit*. It has, so to speak, the immediacy of feeling where neither the "I" nor the "This" is distinguished. (5)

Jaideva Singh therefore uses "consciousness" only secondarily in his glossary: "the Absolute; foundational consciousness; the unchanging principle of all changing" – this last description he borrows obviously from Woodroffe, who has characterised *chit* with exactly these words.

Again, what is the problem with translating *chit* into the English word "consciousness"? In addition to the arguments of Jaideva Singh, the term "consciousness" is – under the conditions of modernity – connected with the individual human awareness. The usual associations are "reason," "subjectivity," "human brain," "thinking." The (largely non-thematic) background of the term is the modern notion of the subject, constructed in the West throughout a long development. The position of the subjective consciousness is central to modern Western philosophy, and this fact forms an important element of the Eurocentric conditions which mark the interaction of the Indian and the Western civilisations.

But the texts of Abhinavagupta and his school make it clear: *Chit/Samvit* is in no way limited to the human realm, and not at all to the human brain. It is

rather Shakti, the heart of phenomenal reality, the *ground* of all intelligence and life. This is true even for the nature of unanimated entities: "Their true reality lies therefore in the one pure consciousness (*bodhamatram*)" (IPK 1.5.4 *vritti*). Abhinavagupta also states:

Having veiled itself, this [*samvit*] resides on the level of insentience (*jadapada*), and in its half-veiled and half-revealed form, it assumes the form of living beings, beginning from the gods down to the level of plants. Each of these two forms – the sentient and the insentient – is wonderfully diverse. (TA 1.134b-135)

In a non-dualistic experience of the world it is consequently thus: the "Highest" (*anuttara*) – characterised by its essence, *chit* and *ananda* – is the "wholeness of all things" (TA 1.332), and *all* things are the Highest. *Chit* therefore cannot be separated from human consciousness, as it cannot be separated from the inner essence of a rock. But would it be fitting to call this core of the rock, its innermost flashing and vibrating light-nature, "consciousness"? The conclusion therefore is, that the term "consciousness," in a modern framework loaded with human rationality and anthropocentrism, is not fit to express the meaning of *chit*. The standard translation of this word could contribute to a permanent anthropocentric misreading of Abhinavagupta and his school – from its breathtaking integral vision, reducing it to some type of medieval psychology of consciousness. Instead of throwing us into new insights and perspectives, the "consciousness-ification" of Trika confirms only our

conventional thinking, and we remain inside the boundaries of our old "world-image."

What would be the practical solution for a translator? I would like to suggest a translation in the form of a non-translation, which would work as a "foreignising translation" (Lawrence Venuti).⁴ The famous scholar-yogi from Varanasi, MM Gopinath Kaviraj, is an example of such a style of translating: he leaves keywords like *samvit*, *chit*, *chitta*, *chaitanya*, *atman*, *vimarsha* untranslated in the English text (see Kaviraj 46-88). In this way the translation does not diffuse the heterogeneity and difference of the original text. The discontinuity between the primary text and the "aim-text" becomes visible. To not translate a keyword like *chit* functions as a signal for the reader, that something remains which cannot be transferred into the other language and its "Hintergrund" ("background," Wittgenstein) – the whole of our activities, practices and certainties in which our words and sentences are imbedded. The untranslated and untranslatable *chit* is a "remainder" (Venuti) for the reader, a reminder that there is something which remains, which resists the hegemony of the other language and any assimilation to the other meaning-system. The fluidity of the translation that creates the illusion of complete transparency is interrupted, and at the same time the truism of our world-view is interrupted. Venuti describes the aim of a

translating, based on an ethics of difference, with the following words:

Translation is a process that involves looking for similarities between languages and cultures – particularly similar messages and formal techniques – but it does this only because it is constantly confronting dissimilarities. It can never and should never aim to remove these dissimilarities entirely. A translated text should be the site where a different culture emerges, where a reader gets a glimpse of a cultural other, and resistancy, a translation strategy based on an aesthetic of discontinuity, can best preserve that difference, that otherness, by reminding the reader of the gains and losses in the translation process and the unbridgeable gaps between cultures. (306)

To abandon the attempt to construct an easily-readable translation (rather, to accept the challenge of the strangeness of Abhinavagupta) contains the chance for an opening of our "life-form" – that structure which is "given" and "accepted," in which we grow up and which is not completely visible to us: the network of conditions which make us think, perceive, live and speak as we think, perceive, live and speak. The otherness of the world-experience of Abhinavagupta, expressed in the untranslatability of the keywords of his language, interrupts the continuum of the interpreted and already understood

⁴ Lawrence Venuti: ed., *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* (New York/ London: Routledge, 1992); "Translation and Formation of Cultural Identities: Cultural Functions of Translation," (*Current Issues in Language and Society* 1.3 [1994]: 201-217); *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation* (London/ New York: Routledge, 1995); *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (New York/ London 1998); ed., *The Translation Studies Reader* (London/New York: 2000).

world in which we are bound. The breakthrough of these boundaries, which happens when we have undergone the frightening experience of non-understanding, of untranslatability into our categories of thinking, is itself a spiritual moment.

A "life-form" is the life-element of a word, like water is the life-element of a fish. This can lead us to the question: what is the life-element in the case of Abhinavagupta's keywords, like *chit*, *samvit*, *prakasha*, *vimarsha*, *pratibha*? It is the extraordinary state of a spiritual practitioner of the highest type, connected with extraordinary epistemic conditions after reaching the highest state, the realisation of Bhairava (*vijnana bhairava*). In our days it is someone like the Kashmiri pandit and yogi Swami Lakshman Joo (Srinagar, 1907-1991), who remained in this highest non-dualistic state in which he perceived Shiva in everything, who provides us with an impression of this condition. In the case of Abhinavagupta we cannot even talk about his spiritual "progress," since he himself gives a hint (cf. TA 1.1 and commentary), that he was a *yoginibhu*, i.e. conceived within the sexual ritual and already born as an enlightened being. Then the question may arise: how to intellectually understand his statements, which have this dimension of cognition as its life-element – based on a realisation beyond the functioning of the intellect? How can one be "at home" as a translator in this life-form? In considering this, I don't want to fall into the trap of viewing Abhinavagupta only as a

mystic. It is rather characteristic of his scholasticism, in the best sense of the term, that he presents the philosophical consequences of his yogic states – a cognition beyond intellect and reason – with the sharpest and most sophisticated means of reason and logic.

Let us conclude: the question "Is *chit* really 'consciousness'?" expresses more than a problem of translation. The untranslatability of *chit*, which denotes the fundamental nature of the "Highest" (*anuttara*), the Goddess Para or Kundalini-Shakti, participates in the majesty of Her unnamed-ness and fundamental alien-ness. This is expressed in the "negative theology" of the Tantras themselves:

"What is the nature of the self?"

In response to that, the Lord says: "She shall be called *kuṇḍalī*, who is above all paths (*adhvan*). She is beyond Brahman; she cannot be explained by means of a simile or an example, she is beyond the physical emptiness (*bhūtavayoman*), beyond the emptiness of *cit*. All kinds of positive conceptual power (*sangrambha*) find their end here. She shall always be known as the negation of everything, the highest aim [i.e. of rest] of all movements (*paramā gati*). She shall be known as the emptiness of Shiva (*śivavyoman*), with the characteristics of the base (*ādhāra*) on which everything is established. [She is] the state of great expansion and the maintainer of everything (*bṛhattvam bṛmbakatvam*); [she is] subtle and contains all subtlety in herself. She is called 'the Highest Brahman,' the aim of everything, and yet cannot be aimed."⁵

⁵ *Trishirobhairava*, qtd. by Jayaratha in his commentary to TA 3.136-140; see also TAV 2: 495.

To accept the untranslatability of *chit* is a resistance to the "Europeanization of the world" (Halbfass 230-52), to the hegemony of the jealous and wrathful Goddess Reason of the European Enlightenment, who has tried to eradicate everything different from Her and looks back over an enormous field of destruction and annihilation in various so-called "traditional" cultures. The untranslated *chit* in the English text marks the space for "another reason;" it

valiantly defends this space, before the steel walls of instrumental rationality completely close. Avoiding the danger of anti-intellectual resentments, it is my conviction that we need this space of the "another reason," of the wisdom that stems from higher forms of human realisation, from beyond rationality, to find a way out from the fundamental crisis of the Europeanised world. I could also say this: we need the voice of Abhinavagupta today.

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Abhinavagupta on Phonetic Texture¹

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IN A PAPER READ at the most recent annual meeting of the American Oriental Society,² Daniel H. H. Ingalls spoke of Abhinavagupta as a commentator whose interpretations of a text often seem improbable, but whose insights are frequently rich in practical criticism of Sanskrit poetry. On that occasion Professor Ingalls drew his examples from the *Dhvanyalokalochna*. In what follows I should like to examine a section in another of Abhinavagupta's commentaries that offers particularly striking evidence of these same two tendencies – the section in the *Abhinavabharati* dealing with the qualities of phonetic texture.

Where the interpretation of a text is concerned, Abhinavagupta's commentary on the treatment of *gunas* in the *Natyashastra* is both an utter failure and an impressive success: he makes no real attempt to arrive at the meaning of the definitions in the work that he is supposed to be explaining, but offers instead the fullest and most perceptive commentary we have on the definitions and examples in an entirely different text. His remarks are based not on Bharata's primitive definitions of ten qualities, nor on the quite different system of three *gunas* advocated in the *Dhvanyaloka*, but rather on the fuller scheme of twenty qualities put forward in Vamana's *Kavyalamkarasutravritti* (KASV). Because Vamana's *gunas* are arranged in ten pairs of qualities of sound and sense, with each pair bearing the same

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² Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "Abhinavagupta as a Commentator," paper presented at the 194th Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Seattle, Washington, March 25-28, 1984.

name as one of Bharata's *gunas*, Abhinavagupta does manage to carry out a rather half-hearted game of tying most of Vamana's definitions in some slender way to the wording of the *Natyashastra*, and in doing so he displays his usual cleverness with such tricks. Since Abhinavagupta's interest clearly lies elsewhere than in Bharata's own treatment of the qualities, I shall not rehearse here the details of most of these tricks. It is enough to say that no one should rely on Abhinavagupta's comments for an explanation of Bharata's views.

The question of how reliably Abhinavagupta explains Vamana's ideas deserves more extended attention. Abhinavagupta was surely in a better position to know the intentions of his fellow Kashmiri than was the much later author of the printed commentary on Vamana's work, the *Kamadhenu* of Gopendra Bhupala. For understanding Vamana's *gunas* – particularly the *shabdagunas*, with which this paper is concerned – we need more help than the *Kamadhenu* is able to provide.

For several reasons Vamana's remarks on this topic, which offer us an unusually complex catalogue of the varieties of phonetic texture, are frustratingly difficult to interpret. Aside from the general problem of the subjective nature of much of the analysis of phonetic texture, there are particular problems in matching Vamana's definitions with his illustrations. While Vamana provides examples for each of his *gunas*, and even counterexamples of

utterances in which slight changes in wording remove the *guna* in question, he does not explain any of his illustrations in detail. In most instances the examples are extensive enough to disprove one's initial guesses on the exact nature of the quality being illustrated, but not lengthy enough to make that nature fully clear. The use of a single example for several different qualities adds to the difficulty of determining the precise characteristics of each *guna*. Further frustration results from Vamana's refusal to give extreme examples: his positive examples always include mixtures of the quality being exemplified with other qualities, and his negative examples are seldom entirely devoid of the *guna* in question. As a final source of confusion, Vamana concludes his discussion of the *shabdagunas* with a sequence of verses giving apparently contradictory definitions of some of the qualities.

It is not unreasonable to hope that Abhinavagupta's remarks may help us to resolve some of these difficulties. At the same time, there is room for help in the other direction: the text of the *Abhinavabharati* that has come down to us is notoriously corrupt,³ and Vamana's treatise can be of some use in gaining an understanding of the passages in the *Abhinavabharati* that depend upon it so heavily. Although Madhusudan Shastri has recently brought out an emended version of Abhinavagupta's text, many of his emendations seem unnecessary, and many problems remain. Some of them can be removed quite easily, simply by bearing in mind that in this section

³ I have used M. R. Kavi's edition of the work, with frequent reference to the emendations of Madhusudan Shastri (see Works Cited).

Abhinavagupta is usually referring to the definitions and illustrations offered by Vamana.

In the space available here it is not possible to examine the whole of Abhinavagupta's treatment of Vamana's *shabdagunas*, and I shall therefore concentrate on those discussions that shed light on one broad concern that is of special interest in the contrast between the later treatment of *gunas* and the views expressed by Vamana and Abhinavagupta, namely the attention to relational aspects of phonetic texture. Not all of Vamana's *shabdagunas* are concerned primarily with phonetic texture; *kanti* and *arthavyakti*, e.g., have to do more with diction and morphology. Where phonetic texture is the primary interest, the tendency of the later tradition is to fall into a largely mechanical tallying of instances of catalogued phenomena, by counting the number of conjunct consonants, or the length of compounds, or the occurrence of specified phonemes thought to be productive of a given quality. In contrast, the remarks of Vamana and of Abhinavagupta are rich in a more lively attention to the interrelations and progressions of phonetic and structural phenomena. Here I shall focus on those *gunas* that, in their treatment by Vamana and Abhinavagupta, involve such relational considerations in three areas: the euphonic joining of words, the length of nominal compounds (which in itself is a matter of syntactic rather than phonetic texture, but whose relational aspects are discussed by Abhinavagupta in a similar way), and the phonetic "tightness" or "looseness" of an

utterance. In the later tradition these particular *gunas* are generally collapsed together into the one quality called *ojas*. In Vamana's scheme they correspond to discrete qualities of texture and composition worthy of individual attention.

The euphony of word-junctures is treated under the heading of the first of the *gunas* in the *Abhinavabharati*, that called *slesha* or "coherence," and the treatment of this quality furnishes a good illustration both of the extent to which Abhinavagupta's remarks can clarify Vamana's examples and of how attentiveness to those examples can make sense of what would otherwise be gibberish in Abhinavagupta's text.

Vamana's treatment of *slesha* as a quality of sound (KASV 3.1.10) proceeds in his typical fashion, giving in his sutra a rather unenlightening definition — *masṛṇatvaṃ śleṣaḥ*, "coherence is softness," — followed by a *vṛitti* that makes sense as far as it goes: *masṛṇatvaṃ nāma yasmin sati bahūny api padāny ekavad bhāsante*, "that is called softness, on which being present even many words appear as if one." As an example he offers the opening line of the *Kumarasambhava*: *asti uttarasyāṃ diśi devatātmā himālayo nāma nagādhirājaḥ*. He then gives three pairs of example and counterexample: *sūtram brāhman uraḥsthale* does not have *slesha*, but *brāhmaṇ sūtram uraḥsthale* does; *bhramarīvalgugītayaḥ* does not have *slesha*, but *bhramarīmajugītayaḥ* does; *taḍitkalilam ākāśam* does not have *slesha*, but *taḍijjatilam ākāśam* does.

The problems arise when one attempts to specify exactly which

phenomena in the examples that Vamana gives carry out the requirement in his definition. P. C. Lahiri states the difficulty that runs throughout Vamana's treatment of the *shabdagunas*:

The definition is generally intelligible but not so all the illustrations that Vamana gives. It is difficult to understand why of the illustrations given some (in the opinion of Vamana) contain *śleṣa* and others do not. Should we be led by the hints given in the *Kamadhenu*, to understand that in the defective *sūtram brāhmam uraṣṭhale* and *taḍitkalilam ākāśam*, the characteristic, namely, *ekavad-bhāsamānatā* is lacking due to the difficulties of smooth pronunciation, and also that in the defective example *bhramarī-valgugīrayaḥ* the effect of smoothness has been spoilt by reason of the use of the word *valgu* instead of *mañju*? Even then we are inclined to ask on what standard the effect of smoothness is to be judged except by the rather uncertain and variable standard of individual appreciation. (99-100)

Fortunately Abhinavagupta supplies objective criteria for the identification of Vamana's *śleṣa*. In the *Natyashastra* this *guṇa* is defined in verse 16.97:

*īpsitenārthajātena sambaddhānām
parasparam śliṣṭatā yā padānām sa
śleṣa ity abbhidīyate,*

on which the portion of Abhinavagupta's commentary that attempts to extract a reference to Vamana's *shabdaguna* begins in the GOS edition as follows:

*atha śabdagaṇam āha nityārthe
padānām śliṣṭatā parasparam yoniḥ*

*sandhibandhanatayānekaṁ ekapadam
iva bhāti tad eva māsrnyam ucyate.
ataś ca padāntarapāṭibhāsyāvāśyā-
pekṣatāyām yathā brahmasūtram iti.
uktaṁ caitac chandodhyāye. (335)*

Here *nityārthe* is wrong; at this point there is regularly a quotation of the *pratīka* of the text being commented on, and as Madhusudan Shastri realised, we want something like *īpsiteneti*. There is also a problem with *yoniḥ*, and in preference to Madhusudan Shastri's solution I would simply change *yoniḥ sandhi-* to *yā niḥsandhi-*. The passage will then mean

Next he defines [*śleṣa* as a] quality of sound – *īpsitena*, etc. The mutual cohesion of words by means of seamless binding, [so that] many [words] appear as a single word, is called softness. And hence [this quality occurs] when there is a necessary dependence upon the reciting of the next word [for the pronunciation of the preceding word], as for example in *brahmasūtra*. And I have said this in the chapter on metre.

Here again our main problem is with the relevance of the example. The passage in the chapter on metre that Abhinavagupta refers to is a section of his commentary on the *Natyashastra* 14.5-7 (GOS ed. 227), a section that begins as follows: *sandhir dvidhā nerantaryam rūpasleṣas ca – bhavatoyeti viparyayaṇa nairantarye asiddhatā, tatrasṭhīrā iti rūpasleṣe bībhatsāślīlāne*. We must of course emend *nerantaryam* to *nairantarvam*, as Madhusudan Shastri does. Beyond this I think we must emend *asiddhatā* to *āślīlatā*, as is suggested by the variant reading *asīlatā*

and becomes certain once one realises that we have here a reference to Dandin's *Kavyadarśha* 1.66: *padasandhānavṛtṭyā vā vākyaṛthatvena vā punaḥ / duṣpratīṭikaraṃ grāmyaṃ yathā yā bhavataḥ priyā*, "That is vulgar which gives rise to a nasty apprehension, either by means of the juncture of words or by the sense of the sentence, as for example [by the juncture of words] in *yā bhavataḥ priyā*, 'she who is your beloved' [which may be understood as *yābhavataḥ priyā*, 'the beloved of a man addicted to sexual intercourse']". The topic here is *ashlilata*, indecency, involving a form of what Dandin refers to in the preceding verse as *yakāradīpadaṃ ratyutsavanirūpaṇe*, "the word that begins with 'y' used in reference to the festival of passion." Similarly, the compound *bībhatsāślīlane* makes sense only if emended to the dual form *bībhatsāślīlate*. The beginning of Abhinavagupta's passage in the chapter on metre should thus read *sandhir dvidhā, nairantaryaṃ rūpasleṣaś ca – bhavato yeti viparyayeṇa nairantarye 'ślīlatā, tatrāsthīrā iti rūpasleṣe bībhatsāślīlate*, "Sandhi is of two kinds, juxtaposition and the coalescence of forms. In an instance of juxtaposition such as arises by reversing the order of words in *bhavato yā* there is indecency, and in an instance of the coalescence of forms such as *tatrāsthīrā* there is loathsomeness and indecency." I am not certain how to interpret the second example, unless we read a short final vowel in *tatrāsthīrā*, so that reversing the order of the two words will produce the loathsomeness and indecency that Abhinavagupta refers to if the result is understood as *asthi-rata*.

At this point in the chapter on metre, Abhinavagupta, having given examples of the two kinds of *sandhi* as they are involved in indecent expressions, now proceeds to illustrate the two types in relation to the smoothness of the joining of words: *sūtram brāhmaṃ iti prthag api dvīruti saṅgaḥ padayoḥ naikapadavattā, brahmasūtram ity anusvānasyottarasamkrāntivyatiṛeṣa cātmani viśrāvayitum āśakyatvād ekapadavadbhāvaḥ*. Here *sūtram brāhmaṃ*, illustrating *sandhi* involving simple juxtaposition, is one of the examples that Vamana gave of an utterance that lacks *sleṣa*, and in using this phrase Abhinavagupta clearly has the same notion in mind: *padayoḥ naikapadavattā*, "the two words do not seem like a single word." It is therefore not unreasonable to suspect that in place of the following example *brahmasūtram* – which is intended to illustrate the type of *sandhi* involving coalescence of forms, but does not – Abhinavagupta actually wrote *brāhmaṃ sūtram*, the accompanying example in Vamana of an expression that does possess the quality of *sleṣa*. This phrase differs from the earlier one in that its first word ends with *anusvāra* rather than with the consonant *m*, and this suggests that instead of *anusvānasya* we may want to read *anusvārasya*. The last sentence will then read: *brāhmaṃ sūtram ity anusvārasyottarasamkrāntivyatiṛeṣa cātmani viśrāvayitum āśakyatvād ekapadavadbhāvaḥ*, "and in *brāhmaṃ sūtram* there is the quality of seeming to be a single word, because it is impossible to recite the *anusvāra* separately without its joining with what follows."

This is still awkward, particularly because of the position of the particle *ca*; the existence of the variant reading *bhasmani* in place of *cātmani* makes me wonder whether Abhinavagupta might not have actually written *-vyatirekeṇa brāhmaṇ itī śrāvayitum*, “because it is impossible to recite *brāhmaṇ* without a union of the *anusvāra* with what follows.” In any case, the basic idea is clear enough: *brāhmaṇ sūtram* is an example of the type of *sandhi* in which the two words flow together smoothly. Abhinavagupta’s remarks on the earlier example *sūtram brāhmam*, meant to exemplify the type of *sandhi* in which the two words are merely juxtaposed without actually flowing together, is equally clear in stating that the two words do not achieve the impression of being like a single word, but here too there seems to be a problem of textual corruption in the phrase *prthag api dviśruti saṅgaḥ*. Is the idea here that the two words are merely contiguous while remaining separate, or that the combination of the two consonants *b* and *r* is pronounced separately from the final *m*, although this *m* is of the same class as the *b*? Two phenomena seem to be at work here: the *m* in *sūtram* differs from the *anusvāra* in *brāhmaṇ* in being possible as a final sound in *pausa*, whereas by the rules of *sandhi* an *anusvāra* requires a consonant immediately after it; and the combination *-ambrā-* differs from the combination *-amsū-* in being extremely rare within a single word.

However we interpret Abhinavagupta’s explanation of *sūtram brāhmaṇ*, my chief concern here is to

establish *brāhmaṇ sūtram* as the intended form of the second example, rather than *brahmasūtra*, and this seems probable for three reasons. First, it fits better with the distinction between the two kinds of *sandhi* that Abhinavagupta is dealing with in this section. Second, it fits with the examples used by Vamana in discussing the same topic, and Abhinavagupta seems to be borrowing the examples of Vamana. And third, it fits the pattern of discussing the results of simply reversing the order of two words, a pattern established in the immediately preceding examples *bhavato yā* and *tatrāsthira*.

If we now return to Abhinavagupta’s discussion of *slesha* in the sixteenth *adhyaya* of the *Natyashastra*, the emended example *brāhmaṇ sūtram* again fits perfectly, in a restatement of the same notion of working together with the following word: “And hence [this quality occurs] when there is a necessary dependence upon the reciting of the next word [for the pronunciation of the preceding word], as for example in *brāhmaṇ sūtram*. And I have said this in the chapter on metre.”

In the continuation of his comments on *slesha* as a *shabdaguna*, Abhinavagupta discusses a more general cause of *slesha*, using as his example Vamana’s primary illustration of the *guna*:

*tathā sandhīyamānayoḥ tathāsandheḥ
sājātyaṃ sāvarṇyaṃ ca sampadyate
vastrakhaṇḍayoḥ iva sūtrasyeva ca.
yathā – “asty uttarasyāṃ dīśi
devatātmā” (Kumarasambhava 1.1).
astīśabdasyottaraśabdasya
sandhīyamānayoḥ takāreṇa samyoge
tayoḥ ca sājātyam, “syān dīśi” ity
anayoḥ sandheḥ nakārasya vargyatvād*

dakāreṇa sāvarṇyam, "diśi devatā" iti nairantaryasandhau dakāreṇa sājātyam, ikāraikārayas tālavṛyāṃśatvena sādṛśyam, "devatātmā" ity atra takāreṇākāreṇa ca.

And for two words that are joined in such a manner, what is successful for their joining in this way is the equality and the homogeneousness (of individual sounds), like that of two pieces of a cloth and of the thread (that joins them). For example: *asty uttarasyām diśi devatātmā*. In the word *asti* and the word *uttara* that are joined together, there is equality of the *t* [in *asti*] and of the two in the cluster [in *uttara*]. For the joining of the two words in *-syām diśi* there is homogeneousness of the *d* with the *n*, because they belong to the same [dental] class. In the joining of the juxtaposition in *diśi devatātmā* there is equality [of the *d* in *diśi*] with the *d* [in *devatātmā*], and homogeneousness of the *i* and the *e* because they both contain a palatal element. In *devatātmā* [there is equality of the *t* and long *a* in *devatā*] with the *t* and long *a* [in *ātmā*].

The phenomenon that Abhinavagupta is describing here might be called word-binding alliteration. Suresh Kumar detected this same phenomenon when he described Vamana's *śabdaguna śleṣha* as the "employment of phonemes having phonetic similarity" (66). But this description is too simplistic, not only because *śleṣha* also involves the other phenomenon explained by Abhinavagupta in connection with the example *brāhmaṇ sūtram*, but also because the repetition of sounds contributes to *śleṣha* only when it operates across word-junctures. Thus in

the conclusion of his remarks on this *śabdaguna* Abhinavagupta distinguishes the phenomenon in question from simple alliteration that does not fulfill this binding function: *na cānuprāsamātram etat, ekapadānuprāse 'pi prāmāṇyavabhāvāt, indīndirāṇām lalito ninādaḥ ity anuprāse ca sāvarṇyenopayogīti* [read *sāvarṇyam nopayogīti*], "And this is not merely alliteration, because there is good authority for [the existence of] alliteration even in individual words, and because in alliteration such as *indīndirāṇām lalito ninādaḥ* the homogeneousness of sounds is not useful [in binding the words together]."

Abhinavagupta's description of this phenomenon works well in explaining the differences between the good and bad examples in each of Vamana's other illustrations. Word-binding alliteration is clearly at work in *sūtram uraḥ*- (but not in *brāhmaṇ uraḥ*-), in *bhramarīmañju*- (but not in *bhramarīvalgu*-), and in *taḍijjaṭilam* (but not in *taḍitkalilam*). Note also that in the last example, the *j* in *taḍij* is an instance not of word-binding alliteration, but of the earlier phenomenon described by Abhinavagupta as conducive to *śleṣha*, for this *j* (like the *anusvāra* in *brāhmaṇ sūtram*) is impossible without the immediate utterance of the following word.

One might object that in preferring *-mañjugīṭayaḥ* to *-valguḡīṭayaḥ* Vamana is actually throwing away an instance of word-binding sounds. But I believe that what is involved here is a further principle that Abhinavagupta does not mention, namely that except where the first principle mentioned by Abhinavagupta is simultaneously at

work – as it is in *asty uttara-*, in *uttarasyām diśi*, and in *devatātmā* – binding consonants must not occur in adjacent syllables, but must be separated by some dissimilar consonant in an intervening syllable. This is true throughout Vamana's examples of *slesha*: in *diśi deva-*, *ātmā himālayo*, *nāma nagādhi*, *sūtram uraḥ*, *bhramarīmañju*, and *taḍijjaṭilam*. The principle is violated in his bad examples – in *-valgugītayaḥ* and in *sūtram brāhmaṇam*. Perhaps the repetition of sounds so close together across a word-juncture was felt to impede a smooth flow, just as musicians playing wind instruments resort to double tonguing in fast passages; the connection between the ease or difficulty of pronunciation experienced by the speaker and the perception of the presence or lack of a *shabdaguna* experienced by the hearer is one that Abhinavagupta will explain in his discussion of the *shabdaguna samadhi*.

Although Vamana makes no explicit mention of the repetition of sounds in his discussion of *slesha*, the accuracy of Abhinavagupta's explanation of the phenomena at work in Vamana's examples is impressive, especially when we observe in each instance of word-binding alliteration how consistently what is repeated after the intervention of a different syllable is not simply a consonant or a vowel, but rather a combination of consonant and vowel: the *mā* in *ātmā himālayo*, the *ra* in *sūtram uraḥ*, the *mā* in *bhramarīmañju*, and – with the substitution of a very closely related sound for either vowel or consonant, but not for both – *di/de* in *diśi deva-*, *nā/na* in *nāma nagādhi-*, and *ḍi/ṭi* in *taḍijjaṭilam*. In combination with

his principle of dependence upon the following word, Abhinavagupta's principle of word-binding alliteration accounts fully and objectively for each detail of Vamana's examples, both positive and negative.

The second area of interest is that of the length of nominal compounds. In Vamana's treatment of the *shabdagunas* this topic is addressed most directly under the quality of *madhurya*, or "sweetness," defined by Vamana in sutra 3.1.20: *prthakpadatvaṃ mādhubryam*, "sweetness is the quality of having distinct words." At first glance this may seem the opposite of *slesha*, but Vamana makes clear in his *vritti* what he has in mind: *samāsadairghyanivṛttiparaṃ caitat*, "And this consists primarily in the exclusion of lengthiness of compounds." He offers once again as his example the first verse of the *Kumarasambhava*, which has no compound containing more than two members.

Abhinavagupta's treatment of this quality (GOS ed. 339-40) is equally straightforward, and interesting chiefly for the grace with which he fits Vamana's conception of the *guna* to the definition given by Bharata, which occurs in *Natyashastra* 16.104:

*bahuśo yac chrutam vākyam uktaṃ
vāpi punaḥ punaḥ nodvejayati yasmād
dhi tan mādhubryam iti smṛtam*

That is known as sweetness, by virtue of which an utterance, even though heard or spoken many times, causes no distress.

Abhinavagupta comments as follows:

*mādhubryam āba – bahuśo yac chrutam
ityādi. yad iti yasmād dhetor vākyam
śrutam saṃśayaviparyayayor āspadam*

na bhavatīti tan mādhyamam.
drāghīyāsi samāse tāv avāśyam
bhavata iti tadviraha eva mādhyamam
śabdaguṇa ity uktam bhavati. yathā –
“gābhantām mahiṣā nipānasalilam”
ityādi.

He defines sweetness – *babuśo yac chrutam*, etc. That is sweetness, because of which an utterance that is heard does not become an occasion of doubt or of misunderstanding. What he is saying is that these two will certainly arise when there is a very long compound, so that the *śabdaguṇa* of sweetness is simply the avoidance of that [lengthiness of compounds]. For example – *gābhantām mahiṣā nipānasalilam*, etc.

The verse that Abhinavagupta offers here as an example is from the second act of Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam*. The relational aspects of the length of compounds appear in Abhinavagupta's discussion of this same example under the heading of another quality, *samata* or “evenness.”

In Vamana's treatment of *samata*, we find as usual that his definition of the *guṇa* is clearer than the relevance of his examples. The definition is in *sūtra* 3.1.11: *mārgabhedah samatā*, “evenness is not breaking off the path.” On this his *vṛtti* adds *yena mārgeṇopakramas tasyātyāga ity arthah*, “i.e., not abandoning the path by which one began.” His positive example is, once again, the opening verse of the *Kumarasambhava*. His negative example, illustrating the lack of evenness, goes as follows:

prasīda cañdi tyaja manyum
añjasā janas tavāyam purataḥ
kṛtāñjalih

kimartham utkampitapīvarastana
dvayam tvayā luptavilāsam āsyate

In evaluating this negative example the question is one of which path is taken up and then abandoned. Lahiri, taking his hint from the *Kamadhenu* commentary, offers a grammatical solution: “Here the verse begins in the active voice but ends in the passive” (101); while Suresh Kumar suggests a whole array of possibilities in interpreting Vamana's *śabdaguṇa*: “continued similarity of pattern in phonological, morphophonemic, and morphological structure of the diction employed” (66).

For Abhinavagupta the solution is much simpler: he speaks only of evenness in the length of compounds, and presents Vamana's negative example with differences in wording, to which his interpretation of the *śabdaguṇa* applies even more clearly than it does to Vamana's version of the example.

Bharata defines *samata* in *Natyashastra* 16.100: *nāticūrṇapadair yuktā ... samatvāt samatā matā*, “That which is not provided with overly pulverised [i.e., uncompounded] words ... is considered evenness because of its being even.” The beginning of Abhinavagupta's commentary on this (GOS ed. 336) brings out the relative nature of evenness:

samatām āha – nāticūrṇapadair iti.
śabdānām samatvāt samah
cūrṇapadair asamāsaracanā yatra
sātiśayā na bhavati, atīśayaś ca
pratiyoginam apekṣata iti.
dīrghasamāso 'tyantasamāśaś ca
viśamatā, tadviparyayaena samatā
upakrāntamārgāparityāgarūpety
uktam bhavati. yathā –

*gāhantām mahiṣā nipānasalilaiḥ
 śṛṅgair muḥus tādītaṃ
 chāyābaddhakadambakam mṛgakulam
 romantham abhyasyatu
 viśrabdhaiḥ kriyatām varāhapatibhir
 mustākeṣaṭiḥ palvale
 viśrāntiṃ labhatām idaṃ ca śīthila-
 jyābandham asmaddhanuḥ*

*iti. (atra) avāntaravākye
 samastadvipadā hi nātidīrghā vṛttiḥ.*

He defines evenness – *nāticūrṇapadair iti*. Because of the evenness of its expressions, that is even in which arrangement without compounds, through the use of uncompounded words, is not excessive; and excessiveness is relative. What he is saying is that the use of long compounds and the constant use of compounds constitutes unevenness, while by the reverse there is evenness, in the form of not abandoning the path by which one has begun. For example, the verse *gāhantām mahiṣā*, etc. – because in the sentences that make up this passage the compounding, which uses compounds of [generally not more than] two members, is not excessively long.

The relative nature of the evenness in this example becomes clearer as Abhinavagupta proceeds to contrast this verse with his own reading of Vamana's negative example:

*"prasīda caṇḍi tyaja manyum aṇḍasā
 janas tavāyam purataḥ kṛtāñjaliḥ /
 kim ittham..." iti cūrṇapadair
 upakramyāsamāpta eva vākyāntare 'pi
 [read hi] dīrghaḥ samāsaḥ kṛtaḥ –
 "...utkampitapīvarastanadvayonmiṣat-
 suptavilāsam āsyate." pūrvatra
 ("gāhantam" ity atra) tv
 avāntarārthasamāptāv
 arthāntāropakrama eva samāseṇa
 "chāyābaddhakadambakam" ity*

*upakrānto 'pi na caityāt kūpapatanam
 iva cūrṇapadam prayuktam
 "mṛgakulam" iti.*

[In the counterexample] what is begun with uncompounded words – *prasīda caṇḍi tyaja manyum aṇḍasā janas tavāyam purataḥ kṛtāñjaliḥ / kim ittham* – is not carried through to the end, because within this next sentence a long compound is used – *utkampitapīvarastanadvayonmiṣat-suptavilāsam āsyate*. Whereas in the previous example (i.e., the verse beginning *gāhantām mahiṣā*), although he has begun with a (longer) compound, *chāyābaddhakadambakam*, in taking up the next idea once another idea has been completed, nevertheless by using the word *mṛgakulam* he has not employed [immediately after the longer compound] an uncompounded word, which would have been like falling from a monument into a well.

Abhinavagupta's point is this: in the verse beginning *gāhantām mahiṣā*, a pattern of mixing uncompounded words with compounds of only two members is followed. The compound of three members that occurs at the start of the second quarter of the verse is not in itself excessive, particularly since it begins a new sentence, but it would produce a jolting effect if it were followed immediately by an uncompounded word. This unevenness is avoided by using a compound of two members, *mṛgakulam*, to provide a smooth transition between the longer compound and the uncompounded word *romantham*. The counterexample, in contrast, not only jumps from a well-established pattern of uncompounded words to a single huge compound, but also places

immediately after that compound a single short uncompounded word.

In his treatment of the *shabdagunas* connected with our third area of interest, that of phonetic "tightness," Abhinavagupta shows the same concern for transitions.

Phonetic tightness or compactness in itself is the distinguishing characteristic of the *shabdaguna* that Vamana calls *ojas*, "strength." He defines it in sutra 3.1.5: *gāḍhabandhatvam ojaḥ*, "*ojas* is the quality of having compact composition." As his positive example he gives *vilulitamakarandā mañjarī-r nartayanti*, and as his negative example *vilulitamadbudhārā mañjarīr lolayanti*. In seeking to interpret these examples, Lahiri, again following the *Kamadhenu*, suggests that several specific phonemes are involved: "compactness of word structure, by which is meant perhaps the cohesiveness due to the frequent use of conjunct consonants specially of the letters of the same *varga* or of any other letter conjoined with *r* or *y*" (94). And Suresh Kumar again gives too general an interpretation: "greater employment of consonant clusters" (66).

Abhinavagupta agrees that consonant clusters are involved, but only those in a specific environment: consonant clusters that come immediately after short vowels. He introduces his explanation of this (GOS ed. 340-41) through a clever interpretation of a single word in Bharata's definition (NS 16.105) of the quality. By lifting the word *sānurāgaib* from Bharata and giving it a completely new twist, Abhinavagupta moves from a discussion of the *arthaguna ojas* to the *shabdaguna* in these words:

Yatbā [read *tathā*] *sānurāgaib* [iti]
yatra varṇo varṇāntaram apeṣate
tatra sānurāgatvam. "vilulita-
makarandā mañjarīr nartayanto" –
atra ra iti śabdo ndaśabdām
svagurutvāyāpeṣate, na ity ayam
śabdo ya ity ayaṃ ca [rtaśabdām]
ntaśabdām ca. no [read *nto*] *ity ayaṃ*
ca nte [read *cānte*] *gurutvāt,*
svaviśrāntijanitakālopacaya-
labhyaṃ gurutvaṃ nākāṅkṣatīti
dviṭīyapādapāṭhaṃ samanantaram
evāpeṣate. "vilulitamadbudhārā
mañjarīr lolayanta" iti pāṭhe
dhāśabdo lośabdo tīśabdas [read
rīśabdas] *ca jātyāpeṣata iti.*

Furthermore, *sānurgair*, "with attachment." There is the property of having attachment when one sound depends upon another. [For example, take the illustration given by Vamana:] *vilulitamakarandā mañjarīr nartayanto* – here the sound *ra* depends upon the sound *nd* in order to be a heavy syllable, and the sound *na* and the sound *ya* depend upon the sounds *rt* and *nt*. And the *nto* at the end, since it is [already] heavy, has no need of the heaviness that would be achieved by the accumulation of time produced by pausing after it, so that it depends upon the recitation of the second quarter [of the verse, without which the *-aḥ* cannot be pronounced as *-o*] immediately after it. If we take the reading *vilulitamadbudhārā mañjarīr lolayanta* [as in Vamana's counterexample], the sounds *dhā*, [*rā*], *lo*, and *rī* [depend only upon themselves [in order to be heavy syllables].

In modern parlance we should probably say that these instances of short vowels followed by conjunct consonants, in contrast to the syllables involving long

vowels without conjunct consonants, are conducive to phonetic "compactness" because they result in closed syllables.

Vamana considers the opposite of this compactness a quality in itself, *prasada* or lucidity, which he defines in sutra 3.1.6: *śaithilyam prasādaḥ*, "*prasada* is looseness." In an interesting passage after this definition, Vamana takes up the objection that if compactness is a good quality, its reverse must be a fault. He answers that looseness is indeed a fault if it appears alone, but that when mixed with compactness it constitutes a *guna* recognised in the experience of readers as a separate quality. Eventually he cites, as his example of a balanced mixture of the two, the first half of *Raghuvamśa* 6.70.

The same example is used by Abhinavagupta in his discussion (GOS ed. 336) of *prasada*, in commenting on NS 16.99. While referring again to conjunct consonants, Abhinavagupta also mentions the accompanying characteristics that help to explain the name "lucidity," and in the end disposes rather lightly of the problem of the mixture with *ojas* that had given Vamana so much trouble:

*kalāmātrārūpa eva yatra sandhiḥ ata
eva śaithilyātmā sa śabdaguṇaḥ
prasādaḥ. prasannatā sphuṭatvaṃ
lakṣaṇīyavibhāgatā padānām. yathā
– "atha saviṣayavyāvṛttātmā
yathāvidhi sūnave / nṛpatikakudaṃ
dattvā yūne sitātapavāraṇam" ityādi.
atra nirantaratām muktvā
nānyonyalayo nānyonyāpattisandhir
astīti śithilatā. ekaś ca guṇo [na]
śobhata iti svānubhavasiddhaḥ, tena
vyāvṛttāmeti gāḍhataḥ kṛtā, kakudaṃ
dattveti cāparaḥ savarnapakṣe [read
cāparasavarnapakṣe].*

That is the *śabdaguṇa prasada* in which the word-juncture consists of a single instant of time [i.e., has no consonant cluster], and which therefore is of the nature of looseness. Lucidity is clarity, i.e., the property of having divisions between words that are [clearly] discernible. For example – *atha saviṣayavyāvṛttātmā yathāvidhi sūnave / nṛpatikakudaṃ dattvā yūne sitātapavāraṇam*, etc. Here there is looseness, because beyond [mere] juxtaposition there is no merging of [the sounds of adjacent words] into each other, and there is no word-juncture that requires assimilation. And it is common experience that no quality is appealing when solitary; therefore he has created compactness in *vyāvṛttātmā* [through the use of the three consonant clusters], and also in *kakudaṃ dattvā*, if we take the option of [converting the final sound of *kakudaṃ* to] the sound homogeneous with the following sound.

By bringing out the positive aspect of looseness – the clarity of word-junctures – Abhinavagupta is able to present *prasada* as a good quality in its own right with no apologies, so that the presence of compactness is simply another example of avoiding extremes, rather than an element essential to *prasada*'s status as a *guna*.

The problem of the intermingling of *ojas* and *prasada* appears in a much more complicated form in the last of Vamana's *śabdagunas* that I shall discuss, the quality called *samādhi*. Vamana's definition of *samādhi* (sutra 3.1.12) is, like many of his definitions of *śabdagunas*, tersely worded and thoroughly mysterious: *āroḥāvaroha-*

kramah samādhīḥ, “*samādhi* is the sequence of ascent and descent.” In his *vṛtti* Vamana provides the information that *samādhi* means *parihara*, “avoidance,” and he then proceeds to give first what seems to be his own interpretation of the *guṇa* and then another opinion:

ārohasyāvarohē sati parihārah,
avarohasya vārohe satīti.
tatrārohaḥpūrvō 'varohō yathā –
 “*nirānandaḥ kaunde madbhūni*
paribhuktojjhitarase.” *avarohapūrvas*
tv āroho yathā – “*narāḥ śīlabhraṣṭā*
vyasana iva majjanti taravaḥ.”
ārohasya kramo 'varohasya ca krama
ārohāvarohakramah, kramenārohaṇam
avarohāṇaṃ ceti kecit. yathā –
 “*niveśaḥ svaḥsindhoḥ tubinagirivṛthīṣu*
jayati.”

Thus it is the avoidance of ascent while there is descent, or the avoidance of descent while there is ascent. Of the two, descent preceded by ascent is as follows: *nirānandaḥ kaunde madbhūni paribhuktojjhitarase*. Ascent preceded by descent, however, is as follows: *narāḥ śīlabhraṣṭā vyasana iva majjanti taravaḥ*. A sequence of ascent and of descent means a sequence of ascent and a sequence of descent. Some say that it is ascending and descending in sequence. For example: *niveśaḥ svaḥsindhoḥ tubinagirivṛthīṣu jayati*.

So far Vamana has told us nothing to explain what ascent and descent are. In the sutras that follow, he struggles with the questions arising from the suspicion that the two are simply *ojas* and *prasada*.

Sutra 13 raises the question: *na prthak, ārohāvaro-hayoḥ ojaḥprasāda-rūpatvāt*, “[It is] not a separate [quality], because they [i.e., ascent and descent] consist of *ojas* and *prasada*.”

Sutra 14 gives an answer: *na, asamprkṛtatvāt*, “Not so, because [in *samādhi*] they are not intermingled.” The *vṛtti* here adds: *samprkṛtau khalv ojaḥprasādaḥ nadīvenikāvad vataḥ*, “When intermingled, of course, *ojas* and *prasada* flow like the merging of rivers.” Here the implication is that in *samādhi* the ascending and descending occur in quite separate streams, whereas in *prasada*, which is always intermingled with *ojas* to some degree, neither *ojas* nor *prasada* occurs alone for very long.

Sutra 15 gives a further reason for considering *samādhi* a separate quality: *anaikāntyaḥ ca*, “And because it is not invariably true” – i.e., as the *vṛtti* explains, it is not always true that wherever there is *ojas* there is ascent, and that wherever there is *prasada* there is descent.

It thus appears that while Vamana recognises ascent and descent as akin to *ojas* and *prasada* – presumably by being brought about through the relatively greater presence of compactness or of looseness – he is not willing to equate them with the two qualities. In the next four sutras he tries to clarify this relationship. Sutra 16: *ojaḥprasādayoḥ tīvraivasthā, tāv iti ced abhivṛṇagamaḥ*, “If you say that the two (viz., ascent and descent) occur when there is an intense level of *ojas* or of *prasada*, that is acceptable.” Sutra 17: *viśeṣāpekṣitvāt tayoh*, “[*samādhi* is a separate quality,] because the two depend upon the particular condition [mentioned in the previous sutra]. Sutra 18: *ārohāvarohan-nimittam samādhīḥ ākhyāyate*, “*samādhi* is said to be due to ascent and descent (i.e., the original definition is not to be taken literally).” Sutra 19: *kramavidhānārthaṃ*

vā, "Or [the listing of *samadhi* as a separate quality] is for the purpose of enjoining sequence."

Vamana then leaves the matter in this rather uncertain state, adding only that *samadhi* is not merely a property of recitation. On this point he refers the reader to his sutra 3.1.27: *na pāṭha-dharmah, sarvatrādṛṣṭeḥ*, "[The *shabdagunas*] are not [merely] properties of recitation, because they are not observed everywhere," i.e., one cannot take any passage at will and recite it in such a way as to bring out any quality that is not inherent in the passage.

In the face of such uncertainties, the attempts of modern scholars to describe the nature of *samadhi* have differed widely, ranging from vague statements such as S. K. De's reference to the *guna* as occurring "when the heightening effect is toned down by softening effect, and vice versa" (11.94), or P. C. Lahiri's use of the same words in describing the first form of the *guna* and his explanation of the second form as a quality that "occurs when there is a gradual rise from the feeble to the vigorous and a gradual decline from the vigorous to the feeble; i.e., an alternating graduation of the soft and the forcible diction" (102), to speculations that seem to ignore Vamana's closing warning that *samadhi* is not a property of recitation, such as A. K. Warder's guess that Vamana's *samadhi* is "probably melodiousness, the quality of a well-balanced melody – according to the commentators 'climbing' means having mostly long syllables and slow, 'descending' means having short syllables and unaspirated consonants" (96).

Both of the views mentioned by Warder raise the additional problem of whether the presence of *samadhi* is due simply to metre, for if the "melody" of a passage is inherent in the text rather than devised by the reciter, it is most likely determined by metre, and if by "long syllables" and short syllables" Warder is referring to the distinction of *guru* and *laghu* the items in question are clearly fixed by the metre. The same problem arises from Suresh Kumar's description of Vamana's *samadhi* as "periodic repetition of short and long vowels or sequences of vowels" (67), because while short vowels can be found in both light and heavy syllables, light syllables cannot include long vowels. The real problem here is that Vamana's three examples, which are supposed to illustrate quite different sequences of ascent and descent, are all in exactly the same metre. If *samadhi* is in fact determined by metre, one can derive differing results from the three examples only by starting at different points in the line, and if this is what Vamana had intended he could have gotten by with a single example for at least two situations.

Nevertheless this metrical view seems to be a very old one. Hemachandra, for example, records the rejection of Vamana's *samadhi* as a quality on the grounds that it is merely "the alternation of collections of heavy and light [syllables]," anachronistically ascribing this complaint to Dandin: *tad idam gurulaghusaṃcayayor anyony-āntaraṇam iti daṇḍī*.⁴

⁴ Viveka on Kavyanushasana 4.1 (281).

Awkwardly enough, it is Vamana himself who first gives rise to the possibility of interpreting this quality in metrical terms, for the definition of *samadhi* given in the verses at the end of his treatment of the *shabdagunas* (following sutra 3.1.24) uses the terminology of metrical analysis: *ārohaṇty avarohanti krameṇa yatayo hi yat / samādhir nāma sa guṇaḥ*, "That quality is called *samadhi* in which the caesuras rise and fall in sequence." If the *yatis* referred to here are those determined by the forms of individual metrical schemes, then we face again the problem of Vamana's having used the same metre in his three examples. If instead we take the term to refer, for example, to the length of words, then the definition can be made to fit the example in a rough way – the example of descent preceded by ascent moves from a four-syllable word to a two-syllable word, and the reverse example moves from a two-syllable word to a four-syllable word – but this is a rather improbable explanation, and no matter how we interpret this last definition, the fact remains that throughout the earlier discussion of *samadhi* Vamana is persistent in connecting ascent and descent with *ojas* and *prasada*.

Unfortunately, the attempt to apply any reasonable understanding of *ojas* and *prasada* to Vamana's three examples will meet with equal obstacles: no matter how the evidence for compactness and looseness is tallied, the examples seem to come out either equivalent or, what is

worse, backwards. The difficulties are painfully clear in the details provided by the Kamadhenu. Gopendra begins by speaking of looseness, but ends up counting heavy and light syllables, and in this endeavour his only recourse, as I have said, is to start at different places in the different examples. Thus in analysing Vamana's first example he says that in *nirānandaḥ kaunde* there is ascent because of the prevalence of heavy syllables, but in analysing the second example he says that in *nara* there is descent because of looseness, while in *śīlabhradṣṭa* there is ascent because of the prevalence of heavy syllables. Why his remark on *nara* does not also apply to *nira* is very difficult to explain.

In fact the only difference between *nara* and *nira* is in the vowel of the first syllable of each, and this is a difference not of length but of quality. An analysis of ascent and descent based on progressions in the quality of vowels is available in Ratneshvara's commentary on the *Sarasvatikanthabharana* of Bhoja.⁵ In his first *pariccheda*, Bhoja presents Vamana's definition of *samadhi* under the name *gati* and specifies, without further explanation, that the ascent and descent referred to are properties of the *svaras* (Calcutta ed. 68-69). Ratneshvara, after running through a metrical interpretation of the *guna*, rejects this interpretation and offers instead an interpretation based on the rising and falling of vowels, explaining, in reference to the example given by Bhoja, that the vowel *o* is "high" (*tunga*) relative

⁵ I was led to Ratneshvara's discussion of this topic by the remarks in V. Raghavan, *Bhoja's Shringara-prakasha* (Madras, Punarvasu, 1963), 306. The Jibananda Vidyasagar edition, which I have used, contains Ratneshvara's commentary on the first three *paricchedas*, followed by the editor's commentary on the fourth and fifth *paricchedas*.

to the vowel *a*, but without specifying in what sense this is true. In the end Ratneshvara remarks *so 'yam ānubhaviko guṇaḥ*, "This is a quality [the discernment of which is] dependent upon experience," implying that it takes a fine ear to figure it out – an observation that agrees well with the difficulty that Vamana and the others have had in explaining its precise nature.

To turn finally to the treatment of the *śabdaguna samadhi* in the *Abhinavabharati* (GOS ed. 337-39): Abhinavagupta, like Ratneshvara (who may well have drawn his interpretation from Abhinavagupta), explains the quality as one involving progressions in the "highness" of individual phonemes relative to each other. Unlike Ratneshvara, he takes care to describe the phenomenon in detail, beginning, after his customary contortions designed to wrench some connection with Vamana's definition out of Bharata's verse (NS 16.102), by giving it a basis that is fairly objective, at least in principle, while also being in accord with the *guṇa*'s acknowledged subtlety: *ārohaś cordhvagamanadvārah prāṇamārutarūpāyā* [read, with Madhusudan Shastri, *prāṇa-rūpamārutasya*] *uccarūpaḥ, apakramaṇam avaroho viparyayaḥ; uccatvaṃ śhānakaraṇavaśāt, bāhyābhyantara-prayatnavāśāc ca*, "And ascent is the highness of wind in the form of the breath, by means of moving upward, [while] descent is the reverse, [namely] its passing downward; the highness is due to the place and organ of articulation, and to the external and internal effort of pronunciation."

In practice this interpretation provides several different series of progressions from high to low, which are ordered by reference to two different principles. The principle at work in the series based on the place of articulation is obvious: a retroflex stop is higher than a dental, for example. Elsewhere a general principle of degrees of constriction seems to be applied. In the series based on *abhyantaraprayatna*, the progression moves from low to high through degrees of "openness" (*vivratatva*), so that the stops (being *sprashta*) are lower than the semivowels (which are only *ishatsprashta*, while short *a* (being *samvrta*) is ordinarily lower than the other vowels (which are *vivrata*). Similarly, in the series based on *bahyaprayatna* the unvoiced sounds (being pronounced with *vivaraprayatna*) will be higher than the voiced sounds (which are pronounced with *samvara-prayatna*), and the aspirates (*mahapraṇa*) are higher than the non-aspirates (*alpaṇa*).

Unfortunately, but for reasons that are not hard to guess, the passage in which Abhinavagupta applies this scheme to Vamana's examples of *samadhi* has reached us in a horribly garbled form. It begins as follows in the GOS edition:

tathā hi – "nirānandaḥ kaunde madhuni paribhuktojjhitarase." tatra nakārād dantyaṇ mūrdhanyo repba uccasthānasthito yady api dantyaḥ tathāpi saṃyogo nirantara-prayatnādhikyaena vivratatamena cākāra dvayena dvivāraprayatnakena ca jihvāmūlīyena cccatvabhājā ārohaṇam asphūṭikaraṇam iti nasabdo 'varohaṇam sampannam apy āsampannakalpaṃ. ārohaṇa-

*saukāryāyaiva pratyuta madhye hy
atra kā viśrāntiḥ. abhāve
uccatamasāṅkalanāśopānārohaḥ
bedāyaiva bhavati nirāsvādyaḥ
kaunda iti yathā eva nirānanda ity
atra yāvanmahāprāṇo jibvāmūliyaś ca
śvāsānupradāno dvivārayuktas tāvad
ārohayata aukāra ākāraṁ avekṣya
rūpavivṛta aukārato 'pi nakāraḥ tato
'pikārokarayoh ūnaṁ vivṛtatvam,
akāras tu saṁvṛtaḥ ity avarohaḥ.
aukāras tu madhye
'varohasaukāryāyaiva durārohād dhi
durāvarohaṇaṁ ceti cūlikāyāḥ
kūpapātanakalpam.*

Here the text is so corrupt that an exact translation would not be possible without massive emendation. But the basic argument and most of its details are discernible. The example is *nirānandaḥ kaunde madhuni paribhuktojjibitarase*. The *r* in the second syllable, being a retroflex consonant, is higher than the initial *n*, which is dental, so that we begin with ascent. One might then think that the following *n* switches us to a descent. But because of the dental cluster that follows, and its effect of making the short *a*'s that surround it less constricted, and because of the following *jibvāmūliya ḥ*, which as the first unvoiced sound after a series of voiced sounds (and also as an aspirated sound) has a heightening effect, the ascent is sustained, so that the descent involved in the progression from *r* to *n*, while unquestionably present, is as if it were not present. In fact it is there precisely for the purpose of easing the process of ascending, because without it there would be no place to rest in the midst of the ascent. If it were not there, the progression would be unpalatable, since

it would lead to fatigue like a staircase that constantly climbs higher and higher.

The ascent extends to the *jibvāmūliya ḥ*, which is the pinnacle of the sequence by virtue of its aspiration and its pronunciation with *vivara* effort. It is followed by a descent in *kaunde ma-*, where the short *a*, being *saṁvṛta*, is lowest of all. The *au* is a high sound; its presence in this descent is for the purpose of easing the process of descending, because to move immediately from the *jibvāmūliya* to the low sounds would be too abrupt: a deep descent from a lofty ascent would be like falling from the crest of a monument [read *caityacūlikāyāḥ*] into a well.

This last point involves the same principle of buffering that we saw in Abhinavagupta's discussion of *saṁata*. Next he gives an example of a passage without such buffering: *khedo yathā – "kurvāṇāḥ paramaṁ mahac ca manasa" iti ākāropadhmānīyebhyo jhaṭiti saṁvṛte 'kāre nīpātanāt*, "An example of fatigue is *kurvāṇāḥ paramaṁ mahac ca manasa*, because here there is a plunge from the long *a* and the *upadhmānīya ḥ* into the short *a*, which is *saṁvṛta*." Abhinavagupta discusses next the third example given by Vamana, *niveśaḥ svaḥśindhoḥ tubinagirivīthīṣu jayati*:

*"niveśaḥ svaḥśindhoḥ" – ity atra
krameṇa vivṛtatarāḥ sparśa iti
krameṇārohaḥ. "tubinagirivīthīṣu
jayati" – atra vivṛtebhyāḥ
ukārādibhyaḥ saṁvṛte 'kāradvaye
pātaḥ ikāras tv anyatvān [read
antyatvān] na ca viśrantisthānam iti
nārohaḥ.*

In *niveśaḥ svaḥśindhoḥ* there is a gradual ascent because the

consonants become sequentially more "opened" [*n* is *śprishṭa*, *v* is *ishatsprishṭa*, while *h* and *s* are *ishadvirṭa*]. In *tubinagirivīṭbīṣu jayati* there is a fall from the more *virṭa* vowels such as *u* [and *i* and *ī*] into the pair of short *a*'s. [When we come to the *i* at the very end,] however, because the *i* is final and because there is no place for resting [to ease a transition from long descent to sudden ascent], there is no ascent.

Abhinavagupta's analysis of Vamana's second example is brief: "*narāḥ śilabbraṣṭā vyasana iva majjanti taravaḥ*" *ity akāra-ikāra-akārebbhyo 'varohamayebhyo vivṛte ikāre ārohaḥ, ante ca visarjanīye āroha eva*, "In *narāḥ śilabbraṣṭā vyasana iva majjanti taravaḥ*, there is ascent in the more "open" *i* [at the end of *majjanti*] following the *a*, *i*, and *a* [in *vyasana iva majjanti*], which constitute descent, and at the end there is definitely ascent in the *visarjanīya ḥ*."

His discussion of *samadhi* closes with an image that touches on the subtlety of this quality:

*tena svabhāvapratiḥbādarśanānuviddbā
bhagavatī vāṇī svarasopaniṣatī
svarasambhāraprabhāvānuro-
dhenaiṣārohaṇavarohakramam bhajate.
pratiḥbādṛṣṭiśūnyatvāt andhapadavad
ārobhādi na bhajet.*

Thus the Blessed Muse, if endowed with the vision of inherent imagination, will move of her own accord to partake of sequences of ascending and descending in complete accord with the power of her richness of sounds. If the sight of imagination is lacking, then like the feet of a blind person she would never climb up or down.

In somewhat the same vein,

Abhinavagupta appends some thoughts on a sensitive response to the phonetic texture of poetry:

*nanv iṣyatā pāṭhasaukaryam syāt,
śrotuḥ tu kim āyātam, anabbijñō
devānām priyaḥ, yathā hi
karkaśasarkaranikarakaṇṭakite deśe
dussancare samcarajjanam paśyantyā
api sukumārabydayāyāḥ pramadāyās
tadā mānupraveśa iva jāyamānam
kṛdam atitarām ādatte
prahārapātādaḥ vā, tathā
sahyodayasya sa eva mārgaḥ,
sukumāratā hi vaimalyāparaparyāya
sahyodayatvam bydayasya hi
kavibhṛdayatādātmyāpattiyogyataiva
utkarṣaḥ. tata evoktam –*

"*śabārthaśāsanajñānamātreṇaiva na
vedyate / vedyate sa hi
kāvyārthato'vajanair eva kevalam.*"
*abhidhānakośam api hi paṣṭatām
suptānvibhaktīś ca viduṣām api na
kāvyatattvānvabodhaḥ tasmād
varṇocāraṇaprayatnena
paraśapaṭhanasparśajanito [read,
with Madhusudan Shastri],
paraśasparśapaṭhanajanito] yaḥ kṛda
uccārayituḥ sa eva śrotuḥ api pāruṣyam
ādhatte.*

"*nīrandhyadbhavadhūnibandhyanu-
gataprāṇaikabandhakramam*"
*ityādaḥ. varṇagatam ca
lālityapāruṣyādi puṣkarādhyāye 'pi
vakṣyate. anyair apy uktam "tena
varṇā rasacyutaḥ" ityādi. svabhāvato
hi kecana varṇāḥ santāpāyantiṣa
nikṛtantīva repṭakākārdaya iva
paraśavṛttipūrvakāḥ. anve tu
nirvāpāyantiṣopānāgarikocitāḥ
lokaḥ evāyam arthaḥ svasamvedyo
'pīti na vitata ity āstām tāvat.*

If someone should ask, "All this may enhance the ease of the reciter, but what does it have to do with the hearer?" then the fool has a lot to learn. Just as at the mere sight of people travelling across a treacherous stretch of land studded

with harsh stones a tender-hearted young lady seems to enter into their identity, and takes on most intensely the pain that arises for them when they strike their feet or stumble, just so is the way of the sensitive recipient of poetry, for what makes a sensitive recipient is the tenderness that is also called clarity [of heart], and the highest perfection of the heart is the ability to fully identify with the heart of a poet.

That is why it has been said, "It cannot be felt merely through a knowledge of the disciplines of sound and sense, for it is felt only by those who know the true essence of poetry" (*Dhvanyaloka* 1.7). Because even those who can recite the lexicons and even those who are learned in nominal and verbal terminations do not [merely by virtue of such learning] understand the true nature of poetry.

Therefore whatever distress is produced for the reciter by the irritation of harsh consonants, because of the effort required to pronounce the sounds, that same distress imparts harshness to the hearer as well, as for example in *nīrandhyaadbvavadbūnibandhyanugataprāṇaikabandhakramah*. And in Chapter 34 [Bharata] will describe such things as the grace or harshness that reside in phonemes. Others have said, "Therefore the sounds bring forth *rasa*," etc. Because some sounds, such as *r*, when involved in harsh constructions, by their very nature

seem to scorch or slash; while others seem to soothe, and these are the sounds called *upanagarika*. This is a matter that is open to everyday experience and that is capable of revealing itself; hence I shall not dwell upon it. So let it rest.

The theory of the inherent effect of individual sounds that Abhinavagupta mentions at the end of this passage is one that was touched on in the *Dhvanyaloka* and repeated ever after. The subtler problem of the effect of relationships between sounds, and of the techniques of transition from one pattern of relationships to another, was rarely accorded detailed attention in the later treatises. It could never have been successfully addressed without the sort of sensitive perception that Abhinavagupta speaks of earlier in this passage, and that is richly exemplified in his own remarks on phonetic texture. That in commenting on the treatment of *gunas* in the *Natyashastra* Abhinavagupta chose to use the ideas of Vamana is probably an indication of his admiration for the presence of the same quality of perceptiveness in Vamana's discussion of the topic. For us this decision was a fortunate one: through all the problems of textual corruption, Abhinavagupta's explanations of Vamana's examples carries through to us an analysis of virtues of Sanskrit verse that no other writer has described with such precision.

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The Descent of Power: Possession, Mysticism, and Metaphysics in the Shaiva Theology of Abhinavagupta¹

Christopher D. Wallis

IT IS MY HOPE that the next ten years of Indological scholarship will demonstrate beyond dispute that Abhinavagupta, the great polymathic scholar and theologian of tenth-century Srinagar, was one of the major figures in the history of Indian philosophy and religion, on a level with such personages as Shankara and Nagarjuna. His importance as an expert in aesthetic philosophy and literary criticism has long been known to Sanskritists in both India and the West, and his contributions to the theories of *rasa* and *dhvani* continue to be studied. His stature as a theologian and metaphysical philosopher is just as great, though less recognised until recently. As the foremost among a number of skilled Kashmiri exegetes of various schools of the Shaiva religion, he did much to elevate Shaivism to a level of sophistication and comprehensive coherence unprecedented to that date, probably helping to ensure its continued patronage by royal courts and exegesis by learned scholars for centuries to come. With Muslim incursions beginning late in his lifetime and culminating in total Muslim rule within three centuries, Abhinavagupta's religious writings were more influential in the long term not in his homeland, but in other parts of India, especially the deep South, where his doctrinal formulations

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¹ This paper could not have been written without two years of intensive study with Professor Alexis Sanderson of All Souls College, Oxford, whose scholarship has proved essential in advancing my understanding of Shaivism. Also very helpful was Dr. Somadeva Vasudeva, of the Clay Sanskrit Library, whose database and encyclopedic knowledge have been invaluable. The germ of the idea for this article was suggested to me when Professor Paul Muller-Ortega (University of Rochester) pointed out to me the passage beginning at MVT 2.14.

were considered as authoritative for centuries.² His greatest theological work, *Light on the Tantras (Tantraloka)*, a massive encyclopedia of Tantric Shaiva doctrine and practice, must be ranked amongst the greatest works of theological exegesis in Indian history.³

Given all the above, we must ask why Abhinavagupta is not as well-known either in India or the West as the other figures thought to help shape the development of Indian religions. In part this is due to more than two centuries of Western scholarship informed by a colonial discourse that privileged the "golden age" of the Indo-Aryans and their texts, the Vedas and Upanishads, as well as Buddhist literature, over and against the "corruption and degradation" of the mediaeval period and its texts, the Tantras and Agamas, characterised by Sir Monier-Williams (1894) as "superstition of the worst and most silly kind." Even today, the vast majority of Sanskrit Indology focusses on the texts written before the Common Era, and later commentators on those texts. This is of course also because the "golden era" colonialist discourse was internalised by nineteenth-century educated Indians, leaders like Swami Dayananda, Vivekananda, and Aurobindo, who helped to constitute "neo-Hinduism" around historical personalities like Shankara, whose monistic theology was sufficiently abstract to be seen as not entirely incommensurate with aspects of

Western monotheism. This Westernised and thus more palatable form of "Hinduism" was then back-fed into the West, where it has been influential both in the scholarly world and in popular culture, where its relativistic perspective of "many paths – one goal" provides a possible solution to the implicit problem of religious pluralism. All this led to a neglect of the equally important literature of the Tantras, for despite their near-total misrepresentation by self-help "gurus" in the West, and their seeming radical "otherness" even compared to modern Indian culture, I would argue that their study is key to understanding the nature and function of Indian religion over the last millennium.

The second reason that Abhinavagupta is not yet sufficiently known or studied is the difficulty in understanding his language. When at first a student takes up his work, it seems that Abhinava's Sanskrit is particularly complex and difficult, and indeed it is, compared to the Epic Sanskrit with which most of us are trained. However, repeated attempts to comprehend Abhinavagupta reveal that the problem is not so much one of language as of context and audience. Abhinava wrote his theological texts primarily for other teachers (*acharyas*) and literate disciples in his tradition, and assumed a body of scriptural knowledge and ritual context not possessed by the modern reader. Finally it dawns on the student that

² We may see his influence on South Indian Shakta texts such as the *Mahartha-manjari* in the Krama tradition, the *Paramananda-tantra* in the Tripurasundari tradition, and authors like Bhaskararaya in the Shrividyā tradition.

³ For more information on Abhinavagupta's life and work, the reader is referred to Muller-Ortega.

comprehension of a text like the *Tantraloka* is contingent on an acquaintance with, at a minimum, several dozen other texts, both scripture (*agama*) and philosophical works (*shastra*). When he or she further realises that many of these texts are unpublished and virtually none exist in proper critical editions, the full overwhelming scope of the daunting task she has set herself becomes apparent.⁴ Because of these circumstances, present-day work in this area, such as this article, will necessarily contain errors that will be corrected by future generations of scholars. Nonetheless, the work must be undertaken if we are to understand the meaning and significance of centuries of development in Indian religion. Perhaps such understanding will also serve to illuminate and rehabilitate the Tantric elements of modern Indian *sampradayas*, such as that of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and others, elements that have had to be sublimated, hidden or glossed over by their adherents because of their incompatibility with the approved construction of "neo-Hinduism."

Works of Abhinavagupta

Between approximately 975 and 1025 CE, Abhinavagupta authored works in many fields of learned discourse, from dance to philosophy (even in the Western sense of that term), from poetry to theology. In the area of aesthetics, poetry, and rhetoric, his important commentary (*-lochana*) on Anandavardhana's *Dhvanyaloka* is well

known to Sanskritists as the final word on the influential *dhvani* school of poetic analysis. He also composed a commentary on the *Natyashastra*, the *Abhinava-bharati*, which has not yet been satisfactorily critically edited. Abhinava wrote several works in the field of general theology, including a commentary on the Bhagavad-gita (the *Bhagavad-gitartha-sangraha*) and the *Paramarthasara*, loosely based on a text attributed to Patanjali but expounding concepts of Shaiva yoga in a simple style for a general audience. His philosophical works included two extensive commentaries on the *Stanzas on the Recognition of the Lord* by Utpaladeva, an important dialectical work arguing with Buddhist opponents and others on behalf of non-dual Tantric Shaivism. These commentaries are the *Ishvara-pratyabhijna-karika-vimarshini* and the huge *-vivritti-vimarshini*, the latter a commentary on Utpaladeva's auto-commentary, now lost. These are also works intended for a wider audience in cosmopolitan Kashmir, including Shaivas of other schools and even non-Shaivas. This may be seen in their appeal to logical argumentation (*yukti*) as well as commonly held scripture (*samanya-shastra*). Abhinava's theological writing, intended primarily for non-dual Shaivas of the Vidyapitha (see below), but extending sometimes to include all Tantric Shaivas, include some of his lengthiest and most impressive work in terms of the vast bulk and complexity of material organised and more or less

⁴ Important publications of critical editions and translations by the French Institute of Pondicherry, such as the recent *Yoga of the Malinivijayottaratantra* by Somadeva Vasudeva and *Parakhyatantra* by Dominic Goodall, are beginning to remedy this situation.

coherently explained. It was mainly focussed on expounding the original scriptural material of his particular school of Shaivism, the Trika. He wrote several commentaries, in various commentarial styles, on the scripture that he takes as the root-text (*mula-shastra*) of the Trika, called the *Latter Triumph of the Phonemic Goddess* (*Malini-vijayottara-tantra* or MVT). Some of these commentaries, including a traditional prose commentary, apparently no longer survive. Those that do survive include the *Commentary on the Verse of the Malini* (*Malini-sloka-varttika*), a work that claims to be a comment – in 1,470 verses – on only the first verse of the MVT. Excepting the first verse, it does not quote the original text, though it discusses many themes of the MVT. Even further removed from the *Malini*'s text *per se* is the monumental *Tantraloka* (TA) mentioned above, in thirty-seven chapters that total 5,858 verses. This work, incorporating quotations and paraphrases from a wide range of Tantric texts (especially the MVT), has the unstated goal of integrating a variety of sects and schools of thought into the ambit of his school, the Trika, thereby establishing a coherent, systematic, and comprehensive Shaiva theology for the first time. The themes of the TA include, in order of its chapters: the epistemological framework of the religion (1); the various means (*upaya*) to liberation appropriate to different practitioners (2-5); analysis of time, space, the levels of reality (*tattvas*) and divisions of the cosmos (*kalas*) (6-10); the veils (*kanchukas*) by which the Divine takes on finite form (11-12); the

Descent of Power (*shaktipata*) (13); the many forms of initiation (*diksha*) and privileges they bestow (14-23); funerary rites (24-25); daily (*nitya*-) and occasional (*naimittika*-) rites (26-28); the *kula-yaga* or sexual ritual and related topics (29); the mantras of the tradition (30); mystic diagrams (*mandala*) and gestures (*mudra*) (31-32); the nature of liberation (33-34); and the transmission, reconciliation, and significance of the Shaiva canon (35-37). To further emphasise the importance of this work, the nature of Abhinava's style, and the esteem in which he is held by both Western and Indian scholars, I here quote from the description of the TA in Teun Goudriaan and Sanjukta Gupta's *Hindu Tantric and Shakta Literature*: "The *Tantraloka* is outstanding because of the disciplined description of systematic metaphysical and theological thought; of the author's complete familiarity with the subject-matter which he treats scholarly and authoritatively; of the sincere manner in which he pays balanced attention to different traditions embedded in sacred literature. It is only natural that this experienced rhetorician... shows himself a complete master of Sanskrit composition. Yet... [t]he specialized jargon and the sometimes mystifying method of presentation adds to the difficulty of the text... [T]he work assumes the character of a comprehensive survey of the manifold aspects of the tradition; an early and precious digest, but much more sincere and faithful to its sources than other works of its kind (163)." Abhinava later wrote a prose summary of the TA, supposed to be more

accessible and often easier to read, entitled *Essence of the Tantras* (*Tantrasara* or TS), saying in his introductory verses:

*vitatas tantrāloko vigāhitum naiva
śakyate sarvaiḥ |
rju-vacana-viracitam idam tu
tantrasāraṁ tataḥ śṛṇuta ||*

Not everyone is able to plunge into the extensive *Tantraloka*. Therefore, let all listen to this *Tantrasara*, composed in straightforward language.

The *Tantrasara* is occasionally more difficult to read than the *Tantraloka*, due to its terse style and to the fact that Abhinava alludes only vaguely or in coded language to practices or concepts that the reader may not be initiated into, but that the initiate will understand. This is part of his general strategy of concealing and revealing, by which he sometimes clarifies and sometimes obscures, in order to illuminate the reader's understanding on many points, and at the same time tantalise him with secret doctrines that are the source of the (Kaula) Trika's power and pre-eminence. A complete translation of Chapter 11 of *Tantrasara*, here published in English for the first time, and supplemented with material from the *Tantraloka*, completes the present essay.

Background: Situating Abhinavagupta and his Doctrine

All that exists and has ever existed is one infinite divine Consciousness, free and blissful, which projects within the field of its awareness a vast multiplicity of apparently differentiated subjects and objects, each object an actualisation of a potential inherent in the divine Light of

Consciousness (*prakasha*) and each subject a contracted locus of self-awareness (*vimarsha*). This projection, a divine play (*krida*), is the result of the impulse (*iccha*) within the Divine to express the totality of its self-knowledge (*jnana*) in action (*kriya*). When that divine Consciousness contracts into finite loci of awareness, out of its own free will, and those finite subjects then identify with the limited and circumscribed cognitions and circumstances that make up this phase of their existence, instead of with the trans-individual overarching pulsation (*spanda*) of pure Awareness that is their true nature, they experience what they call suffering. To rectify this, some feel an inner urge to take up the path of spiritual gnosis (*jnana*) and ritual practice (*kriya*), the purpose of which is to undermine their mis-identification and directly reveal within the immediacy of awareness the fact that the Divine Powers of Consciousness, Bliss, Will, Knowledge and Action comprise the totality of individual experience as well – thereby triggering a recognition (*pratyabhijna*) of one's own identity as the Supreme Lord, the All-in-all. This experiential gnosis is repeated and reinforced through various means (*upayas*) until it becomes the non-conceptual ground of every moment of experience, and one's sense of contracted individuality is annihilated in the incandescence of the complete expansion into perfect wholeness (*purnata*). Then one's perception permanently encompasses the reality of a universe dancing ecstatically in the excitement of its completely perfect divinity.

The foregoing is Abhinavagupta's vision of reality, reduced to its bare essentials. It is a vision that dwelt at the core of a complex religious and cultic system that he inherited and explicated in its terms, ingeniously making sense of a bewildering array of ritual practices and doctrinal typologies within the context of his non-dual vision, transmitted to him from his Trika Guru, Shambhunatha. To understand Abhinavagupta, then, we must situate him in the cultural and historical context that gave him the intellectual tools with which he expressed that vision. So far, though the term Shaiva simply means "a follower of Shiva's teachings," it has been used in this paper as an adjective denoting Tantric Shaivism, or the followers and traditions of the so-called "Path of Mantras" (*Mantramarga*; see below). This is not a modern innovation; we see this same narrower, more specific usage of the term in a variety of Sanskrit sources. For example, Ramanuja in his *Shri-bhashya* polemically writes of those sects of Pashupati (Shiva) that are false, contradict the Veda and are not to be respected, saying that the followers of this doctrine are of four types: Kapalas (also known as Kapalikas or Soma-

siddhantins); Kalamukhas (a.k.a. Lakulas); Pashupatas (a.k.a. Pancharthikas); and Shaivas (*idānīm paśupati-matasya veda-virodhād āsamanjasyāc ca anādaraṇīyatocyate tanmatānusāriṇaś catur-vidbhāḥ – kāpālāḥ kālāmukhāḥ pāśupatāḥ śaivaś ceti*).⁵ The first three groups are referred to in Shaiva sources as *Atimarga*, the Transcendent Path, because its ascetic adherents transcend and are exempt from the ordinary observances of caste and life-stage (*varṇashrama-dharma*) and because it leads to salvation. However, this earlier form of Shaivism (which probably became widespread in first few centuries CE) was itself transcended by the Shaiva Siddhanta and other schools of Tantric Shaivism, collectively referred to as the *Mantramarga*, the surviving texts of which begin roughly in the sixth century CE.⁶

There are many complex ways by which the canon of the *Mantramarga* was analysed and subdivided by the original authors, but the simplest for our purposes splits it into two major streams. First, the Shaiva Siddhanta on the right hand, non-transgressive, compatible with brahminical norms (*vaidika-dharma*), worshipping Shiva

⁵ *Shribhashya ad Brahmasutra* 2.2.35. Thanks to Professor Sanderson for this reference, and for explicating this four-fold division and providing synonymous appellations for the sects.

⁶ Perhaps the earliest surviving significant text of the Shaiva Siddhanta is the *Nishvasa-samhita* (possibly meaning "The Hymns Breathed Out (by God)"), unpublished and surviving in a single palm-leaf manuscript in the Nepalese National Archives in Kathmandu and a 1912 apograph at the Wellcome Institute, London. (Note: the entry in Apte's dictionary is in error in classifying this as a Pashupata text; the first part merely summarises Pashupata doctrines.) The text was the basis for Alexis Sanderson's Ramalinga Reddy Memorial Lectures at the University of Madras, 1997, about to be published in the *Indian Philosophical Annual* by the Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy, Chennai.

without his consort (though she is present doctrinally), following twenty-eight revealed scriptures, and originally dualistic, viewing the Lord (*pati*), the individual soul (*pashu*), and manifested reality (*pasha*) as eternally separate essences. (Note that this instantiation of the Shaiva Siddhanta, present in Kashmir in Abhinavagupta's time, is doctrinally quite different from the non-dual Shaiva Siddhanta seen later in the Tamil South.) Second, on the left hand, the various groups following the sixty-four *Bhairava-tantras*, emphasising to some degree Goddess- and yogini-worship, sometimes transgressive in ritual, rejecting more explicitly the authority of the Veda, and often non-dualistic, panentheistic, and/or idealistic. The *Bhairava-tantras* were further subdivided, most significantly into the "Seat of Mantras" (*Mantra-pitha*) and the "Seat of Wisdoms" (*Vidya-pitha*, where *vidya* is a feminine word for *mantra*). The former is primarily composed of the cult of "Autonomous Bhairava" (*Svacchanda-bhairava*), popular and widespread in Kashmir as well as Nepal and the Deccan (Sanderson 1986: 182). In the latter we find the goddess-centred, radically non-dualist, often transgressive groups, such as that of the "Trinity" (*Trika*), "Family (of Goddesses)" (*Kula*), and "Sequence" (*Krama*).⁷

The main period of scriptural revelation for all these groups was the sixth through tenth centuries CE.

Scriptural texts, originating from various locations in north and central India, were authored anonymously, for they purported to be revealed by one or another form of God, and generally contained information on doctrine (*jnana*), ritual (*kriya*), mystical practices (*yoga*), and observances (*charya*). Usually, each expounded a liturgy surrounding a particular aspect of divinity, and sectarian boundaries were generally marked by liturgical rather than doctrinal differences. The ninth through eleventh centuries saw a flourishing exegetical tradition in Kashmir: *gurus* and scholars, some patronised by the court, expounded the scriptures and helped to establish the dominant schools of thought, which often absorbed other groups, at least doctrinally.

The three main sects that Abhinavagupta makes the basis of his systematic theology, presented in the *Tantraloka* and elsewhere, are the Trika, Kula, and Krama mentioned above, combined with the sophisticated philosophical school of "Recognition" (*pratyabhijna*). His precise cultic system might best be termed as Kaula Trika, that is, Trika as influenced by the later esoteric phase of the Kula (as well as by the Krama). Though the doctrine and practice of these groups formed the core of his works, his theology also subsumed the whole of Tantric Shaivism through extensive quotations and paraphrases (indeed, this may constitute fully one quarter of the TA's text) interpreted in

⁷ For more on these classifications, and the specific groups that comprise them, see the two most important studies on the Shaiva canon: Sanderson (1988) and Dyczkowski (1988).

light of his own non-dual doctrine of the all-pervasive unity of divine Consciousness and its Powers, manifesting through the autonomous conscious agency of every apparent individual. Indeed, he goes even further than mere syncretism: following the *Jayadrathayamala-tantra*, he envisions a hierarchy of all the Indian religious systems, whereby the "liberation" attained through each one elevates the soul to the highest level of reality envisioned by that system, which nonetheless falls short of the highest possible attainment (*paramam padam*), which is reached only through Tantric Shaivism, whose map of all the levels of reality (*tattvas*) is the only complete one. Thus Abhinava deftly positions his lineage and key text exactly at the centre of expanding spheres of divine revelation, where the distance from the centre proportionally corresponds to respective capacity to perfectly represent and access the nature of ultimate reality in all its completeness (*purnata*), and then defends this hierarchy on philosophical, scriptural, and experiential grounds.

An important passage in the *Tantraloka* (37.14-25), when boiled down, claims that the Trika text he makes the basis of his exegesis, the *Malini-vijayottara*, is the essence of the highest Agama (the earlier *Siddha-yogeshvari-mata*, also a Trika text) of the highest division (the *Vidyapitha*) of the highest teachings (the *Bhairava-tantras*) of the Mantramarga. The success of Abhinavagupta's enterprise may be partially seen in the fact that the best-

known commentator on the *Tantraloka*, Jayaratha, living two centuries later, himself did not belong to the Trika but was initiated into the Shrividyā, and yet took Abhinava's exegesis as authoritative.

The "Descent of Power" and Related Concepts

The primary purpose of this essay is to focus on a specific doctrine articulated in the scriptural texts (*tantras*) and elaborated by Abhinavagupta in the *Tantrasara* and *Tantraloka*. This is the theory of *shaktipata*, "the Descent of Power," or "Descent of Grace," which occupies an important place in Shaiva theology and yet has not so far been treated in any detail by the academic world. It is hoped that the exploration of this and the related concepts of *avesha* (possession or immersion) and *diksha* (initiation) in this paper will: (1) clarify the usage and relationship of these terms based on the primary sources; (2) partially illuminate the nature of religious experience and the qualifications for religious praxis in Shaivism; (3) give insight into the world-view of the Shaivas; and (4) help to pinpoint a specific and significant issue in the phenomenological study of religion generally.

In order to accomplish these goals, I will briefly survey the use of our key terms over several centuries of textual development, building up a theory as to their range of meanings, focus on Abhinavagupta's usage and understanding of them in as much depth

as space permits, provide the reader with translations and the original Sanskrit with which to draw her own conclusions, and make tentative conclusions of my own as to the meaning and larger significance of the "Descent of Power."

Context: The Religious Landscape

In the mediaeval period (by which I mean roughly 300-1300 CE), Shaivism was a flourishing religion of its own, sharing the Indian religious landscape with Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism and various forms of Vedic religion. In each of these areas we must make a distinction between cultural/civic forms of religion such as might be designated under the term *dharmā*, and soteriological forms of religion, that is to say, paths to liberation, salvation, or beatitude of some kind (*moksha*, *mukti*, *nirvana*, *apavarga*, etc.). Viewed from this perspective, we see that Vedic religion was dominant in the civic sphere, pervading as it did all of the cultural landscape apart from Buddhism and Jainism, which were arguably on the wane during this period. However, in the realm of soteriology, Vedism had to compete with other paths to liberation, including dozens or even hundreds of interrelated sects organised around a variety of deities, especially but not limited to Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti, Surya, and Ganesha. Though these five were assimilated into Brahminism and appear later within its orthopraxy as the deities of the *pañchayatana-pūjā*, this must in fact be considered the influence of Tantrism – for these five deities (in

various forms, including originally local or tribal forms) are the very ones to which a large body of Tantric literature accrued. In fact, though the Puranas associated with these deities are better known today, they must have been easily outnumbered by the array of *Tantras*, *Agamas*, and *Sambhitas* associated with them (and indeed much Tantric material was incorporated within the Puranas, such as the *Agni-* and the *Linga-*). A large but unknown percentage of these texts is now lost, especially those associated with cults that did not survive as long, like those of Surya.

Therefore in mediaeval India a kind of religious pluralism existed similar to that of the ancient Hellenistic world or indeed the modern period. What is particularly fascinating in the Indian case is that the distinction between civic and salvific religion is one observed in the original sources. This is seen most conspicuously in the fact that one who enters one soteriological path and then wishes to convert to Shaivism must go through a special ritual (*lingoddhara*) to remove the marks (*linga-*) of his previous path before he may be initiated, and even then may never take the office of a *guru* or *acharya* (see TA 22.42-48). This is true not only for a former Buddhist or Vaishnava, but even a Vedic *vanaprastha* or *sannyasin*, thus demonstrating a distinction in the minds of Shaivas at least between Vaidika observance as a cultural institution and as a more specifically religious practice.

This distinction exists in Shaivism as well, where the structure of the religion in some ways paralleled Buddhism: a

small percentage of initiated religious specialists were supported, along with the religion's temples and *mathas*, by large numbers of uninitiated laity. There were also major differences as well: in Mantramargic Shaivism, initiation was extended to householders as well as those wishing to become renunciates, though the number of initiates probably remained relatively small. The laity, usually called Rudra-bhaktas, were guided in their spiritual life by an eight-fold observance detailed in the *Shiva-dharma* ("Religion of Shiva") and the *Shiva-dharmottara*, two key texts for understanding Shaivism as a cultural institution in this period, which, unfortunately, remain unpublished. Rudra-bhaktas, as participants in the non-soteriological aspect of the religion, were guaranteed not liberation but a period of enjoyment in Shiva's heaven (*rudra-loka*) after death. Some of these lay devotees would seek initiation (*diksha*) into the formal practice of the religion, and thus enter into an intimate relationship with their deity in the form of a specific mantra, supported by an array of ancillary mantras that embodied powers which brought him or her enjoyments and ultimately liberation.⁸

Initiation (*Diksha*) and Qualification (*Abhikara*)

Initiation into the esoteric elite of Shaiva practitioners was considered a highly

significant event, probably viewed by most initiates as the most important event of their lives. Leaving aside a preliminary and probationary lower initiation (*samaya-diksha*), the primary form of initiation was *nirvana-diksha*, which, as the name implied, granted guaranteed liberation at the time of death (*muktiś ca śivādīkṣayā*, "liberation is bestowed by Shiva's initiation," MVT 4.8, cited by Abhinava in TA 15.6). This initially unique (*apūrva*) and striking claim must have been instrumental in the growing popularity of Shaivism. This doctrine had gained sufficient currency already by the early seventh century for Buddhist scholar Dharmakīrti to bother attacking it in his *Pramāṇa-varttika* (*Pramāṇa-siddhi* section, 257-67). The guru – thought to be acting as the vehicle of Shiva, who is the true agent – accomplished this initiation through a complex and not inexpensive ritual, lasting two or more days, in which the initiate's latent *karma* on all levels of reality was destroyed (*tattva-shuddhi*), and his soul ritually fused with Shiva (*śhiva-yojana*). This made the initiate a *Putraka* ("like a son" of the guru), inducting him into the world of Tantric ritual and (if he wished) yoga, as well as making him a part of an initiatory in-group (*kula*), enjoying direct and regular instruction from the guru, and finally qualifying him to read the sacred texts of the tradition. He could, if he wished, strive

⁸ Women were also initiated, though this was far more common in the Goddess-centred left-handed schools, in the most extreme of which women could even become Gurus. This article generally uses the pronoun "he" because the majority of initiates and gurus were men; but, as in Sanskrit, the pronoun is inclusive.

for liberation in life (*jivanmukti*, a doctrine of the left) or for supernatural powers (*siddhi*), but at any rate his future was assured, for at the fall of the body, he would merge with Shiva or become equal to him, depending on the school of thought.

But what qualified a person to receive such a sacred initiation? In answer to this, we discover another unique doctrine of Shaivism. This is the concept of the Descent of Power or *shaktipata*, which in essence is the doctrine that one must have undergone an internal, subjective, powerful mystical experience, through the grace of God (*isha-prasadena*) – which inspires one's heart with devotion for Him and makes one ready to turn toward the spiritual path – as the necessary and sufficient condition for initiation. This doctrine, if enacted successfully, would produce elite communities of initiates for whom religion was not just a cultural institution, serving primarily apotropaic ritual functions in daily life, but rather a lived and deeply felt inner reality. Since initiation bestowed (eventual) liberation, the doctrine of *shaktipata* further implied that this mystical, experiential dimension is necessary for the attainment of that goal. Of course, the most salient problem with requiring a subjective qualification for initiation is the one of how to determine that this internal event has taken place. As we shall see, the texts devote considerable thought to the various signs (*chihna*, *lakshana*) by which to verify that *shaktipata* has occurred.

The above account, like most of the essay thus far, suffers from over-

generalisation and over-simplification. This was necessary in the discussion of *diksha* and *shaktipata* above in order to include the many divergent schools of Shaivism in a general outline. As we shall see, things did not always follow this pattern: for example, in the Kaula Trika, the *shaktipata* experience could take place *within* the context of initiation, and of course the nature of *shaktipata* is understood quite differently in the dualist and non-dualist camps. The rest of the essay will be devoted to exploring these issues in detail and getting to grips with the accounts in the primary sources.

Possible Antecedents in the *Atimarga*

For an early intimation of the doctrine of the Descent of Power, we may look to the earliest documented form of Shaivism, that of the Pashupata religion, putatively founded by Lakulisha, perhaps first century BCE or CE. The sole surviving text of the tradition is the *Pashupata-sutras*, perhaps second century CE, with one major commentary, Kaundinya's *Commentary on the Five Categories* (*Panchartha-bhashya*), circa fourth century CE. In the latter, Kaundinya describes how Lakulisha gained his first disciple, saying: "Then the blessed Kushika, impelled by Rudra, approached the master. Observing signs of a superior state in him, such as complete contentment, and the opposite in himself, he took hold of his feet. . ." (*ato rudra-pracoditah kuśika-bhagavān abhyāgatyācārye paripūrṇa-paritrptyādy-utkarṣa-lakṣaṇāni viparītāni cātmani*

dr̥ṣṭvā pādāv upasamgrhya ...).⁹ The key phrase here is *rudra-prachodita*, "impelled by," or "inspired by Rudra," implying that it was through God's grace that he felt the desire to seek a guru and was successful in finding one.¹⁰ We will see this echoed in the *Malini-vijayottara* below, which was probably composed around four centuries later.

Another small, but possibly significant, piece of evidence comes from one of several sects within or based on Pashupatism, that of the Lakulas referred to above. This group stands midway between the earlier Pancharthika Pashupatas and the later Tantric Shaivas in terms of both doctrine and practice.¹¹ The fullest description of the Lakulas is found in the early Shaiva Siddhanta text, the *Nishvasa-sambhita* (referred to in footnote 6), or more specifically the introductory portion of that text, the *Nishvasa-mukha*. The purpose of this work was to summarise the lower levels of revelation and religious practice in a hierarchy that the (recently developed) *Mantramarga* crowns. These levels are: first, the ordinary, worldly religion (*laukika dharma*) devoted to Shiva, including *pujas*, pilgrimages, donations to Shiva temples and so on, in other words the practices of Rudra-bhaktas mentioned above. Above that is the

Vedic practice (*vaidika dharma*) of forest-dwellers (*vanaprastha*) and renunciators (*sannyasin*) devoted to Shiva. Third are the Samkhya/Yoga schools (*adhyatmika dharma*), highest of non-Shaiva disciplines; fourth is the Atimarga, which the text subdivides into the Pashupatas (*atyashrama-vrata*) and the Lakulas (those who follow the "vow of the skull" [*kapala-vrata*], also called the "vow of the greater Pashupatas" [*mahapashupata-vrata*]). The fifth and highest category then is the *Mantramarga*.¹² This is perhaps the beginning of the Shaiva inclination for inclusive hierarchies that we see clearly in Abhinavagupta.

It is in the *Nishvasa*'s discussion of Lakula doctrine that it mentions initiation. After a brief enumeration of the levels of the universe, it goes on to say:

*krīḍārtha-siddhaye caiva
prakriyādhvānam āśritah |
vai prakriyādhvānam attha-śabdena
dīkṣayet ||
attha-śabda-nipātena dīkṣitāś cāpaśur
bhavet |
kriyāvānś ca dur-ācāro mucyate nātra
saṁśayaḥ ||*

In order to accomplish (the disciple's) goal of sporting (in all the levels of the universe), following the path of this hierarchy (just described), he [i.e. the guru] should initiate him into the path of the hierarchy with the word

⁹ Commentary on *Pashupata-sutra* 1.1, first word. Thanks to Professor Sanderson for drawing my attention to this passage.

¹⁰ The usage of the term "God" is justified in effectively monotheistic contexts such as Pashupatism.

¹¹ My knowledge of the Lakulas is entirely indebted to Sanderson and the valuable primary sources he has provided.

¹² Note that the *Kamikagama* follows the same classification exactly, further explaining that the *Laukika*, *Vaidika*, *Adhyatmika*, *Atimarga*, and *Mantramarga* texts emanate from Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Ishvara, and Sadashiva respectively (see Dyczkowski 31).

"NOW" (*atha*). Initiated by the descent of the word *atha*, he will not become a bound soul (again). One who has received this rite, (even) a doer of evil deeds, is liberated. On this point there is no doubt. (*Nisvasa-mukha* 116-17)

Here we see an early appearance of the doctrine that initiation liberates, and curiously the guru is said to initiate "with the word *atha*." Sanderson (2005) has theorised that this referred to an initiation into the teachings of the Pashupata-sutras, which begin with the word *atha*, a word which thus, commentator Kaundinya says, signals the end of suffering (*atha-śabdah. . . asti sa duḥkhānta iti*). Even curiously, the text characterises the initiation as being through the descent (*nipata = pata*) of the word "*atha*," as if it is a kind of mystical force in itself, embodying the power of the text it inaugurates.¹³ This connotation was certainly seen by the tradition itself in its Mantramargic instantiation, for Somananda, in a lost text quoted by Abhinavagupta, claims that the letter "*a*" signifies Shiva, and "*tha*" is Shakti (*a-kāraḥ śiva ity uktas tha-kāraḥ śaktir ucyate*), thus giving us the phrase "initiated by the descent of Shiva's Power" (*Paratrimshika-vivarana* 99-100). However, we have no way of knowing if Somananda was indeed thinking of the Lakula usage of "*atha*" or of an entirely different usage. Without further evidence, we can do no more than note this interesting instance of a possible antecedent.

Antecedents in Kaula Materials

One of the earliest traditions that would constitute Tantric Shaivism is the proto-Shakta sect called Kula. Although it seems not to have survived long as an independent entity, its texts and practices, especially in their more esoteric "Kaula" phase, fed into and influenced the left-handed groups such as the Trika and Krama. In fact, in looking at Shaivism as a whole in the centuries around Abhinavagupta's time, the broadest classification that emerges is that of the Sadashiva-centred Siddhanta on the one hand and the interrelated Goddess-centred (*shakta*) groups on the other. Abhinava quotes liberally from both types of literature, supporting his vision of a Shaivism integrated under the doctrinal reach of the Trika. The Shakta cults prospered in the later mediaeval period and down through the present day, for example in the Kali cult of Bengal and the Shrividya of Tamil Nadu amongst many others. It is not surprising, then, that this powerful stream of the tradition had its roots in antiquity. It seems unlikely to be coincidence that the earliest proliferation of larger-scale Goddess temples and icons in permanent materials and the earliest Kaula texts are from roughly the same period (i.e., around the fifth to seventh centuries).

The Kaula texts are written in elliptical Sanskrit liberally sprinkled with non-Paninean forms, archaic styles,

¹³ Compare Shankara's discussion of the word *atha*, to which he attributes great significance, in his *bhashya* on *Brahmasutra* 1.1.1.

and Prakrit derivations, in the style that in the tradition was called *Aisha* Sanskrit, because it emanates from *Isha*, the Lord, enacting his freedom to break the rules of conventional grammar. In fact, they may have been written by non-brahmins or brahmins far from the Sanskritic heartland of Aryavarta. The texts feature obscure and sometimes bizarre ideas and practices, though this may seem so because this unpublished corpus of texts is understudied, and parallels are not yet well established nor corruptions repaired.

First we look at the Kaula text called *Unlocking the Obscurity* (*Timirodghatana*), structured like many Tantric texts as a conversation between Shiva in the form of Bhairava and his consort the Goddess.¹⁴ The sixth chapter details some of the signs (*chihna*) of the entry (*avesha*, *samavesha*) of Shiva's Power (*shakti*) into the body of the practitioner. This entry occurs at the instigation of a charismatic, puissant Guru, such as is typical in Kaula contexts and marks an important distinction to Shaiva Siddhanta, where the guru may sometimes be a mere officiant. The text begins, then, with the Goddess asking Bhairava,

*kā sā saṅkrāmate śaktiḥ kāni cihnāni
darśayet* (6.1ab)
... *kena kālena siddhidā*

*siddhasya kāni cihnāni kathaitad
paramēśvara*¹⁵ (6.3bcd)

What is this Power that transfers (into the disciple)? What are the signs by which it is shown?... After how long does She grant attainment? What are the signs of one who has attained [a *Siddha*]? Tell me that, Supreme Lord.

To which Bhairava replies,

*sarvva-vyāpi tu sā smṛtā
sabāhyābhyantare
debe sarva-jantuṣu saṁsthitā
sad-ācāryopadeśena para-debe tu
saṅkrāme*[r] (6.4d-6.5)

She is taught to be all-pervasive. She is established in both the subtle and physical bodies of all creatures, (and yet) she may "pass" into another body at the command of a true master.

*deham vyāpya adbhordhvena*¹⁶
*parā-śakti[m] praveśayet
yasyaitāni tu cihnāni sa guru[r mo]kṣa-
dah smṛtaḥ*¹⁷ (6.8)

He (the Guru) will cause the Supreme Power to enter (the disciple), pervading his body up and down; one who has these signs [i.e. capabilities] is taught (in this tradition) to be a Guru who grants liberation.

*kṛtvā sarvopacārāni
ātmanānya-dhanena vā
grāhyam tat paramam jñānam guru-
vaktreṣu saṁsthitam*¹⁸ (6.9)

¹⁴ The text is unpublished. My thanks to Somadeva Vasudeva making me aware of it, and for the e-text he put up on the Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages (GRETIL).

¹⁵ Em. VASUDEVA to restore metre: *etat katha paramēśvara* MS.

¹⁶ Corr. Sanderson: *dehavyāpyam adbhordhvena* MS.

¹⁷ Em. Vasudeva: *sa guru *kṣadā smṛtā* MS.

¹⁸ Em. Sanderson: ... *ātmanena dhanena vā grāhya tatparasamjñanam guruvaktreṣu saṁsthitam* MS.

Having performed all the offerings of worship, with his own or another's wealth, one ought to obtain the supreme wisdom that abides in the mouth of gurus [i.e. mantras and other teachings].

*kaulopadeśa-ratnena yogino
divya-darśanam*¹⁹ (6.10ab)
*yoginīṣṭh prathamam paśyet
chāyā-matram punaḥ punaḥ*²⁰
*yathā cābhyasate yoga[m] tathā-rūpaṁ
pravarttate* (6.11)

By means of this jewel of Kaula teachings [i.e. the entry of supreme *śakti*], the yogin will see a divine vision. . . First, one will see a yogini in the form of simply a (coloured) light, again and again. The appearance (of the yogini) proceeds in accordance with his practice of yoga.

- - - *paśyati kṛṣṇa-rūpiṇī[m]*
*raudrī vā saumya-rūpeṇa nānābharaṇa-
bhūṣitā* (6.12bcd)
*dr̥ṣṭa-naṣṭa*²¹ *sthitā caiva babu-rūpeṇa
[dr̥]śyate*
*antariṣṭha-sthitā[m] nityam sarve
paśyanti mātaram* (6.13)

He sees her in a black form, fierce; or with a benevolent appearance, adorned with various jewel ornaments. She remains but for a moment, then vanishes, and is seen in many forms; all those (who succeed in this practice) always see the Mother abiding in the sky (of consciousness).

*raudra-bhairava-rūpeṇa babu-yogi-
parīṇatām*
*yogeśvara-puraṇ caiva ātmānanda[h] sa
paśyati* (6.14)

She is surrounded by many yogins in the form of fierce bhairavas; full of the bliss of his Self, he sees the world of the Lords of Yoga.

*sapta-vimśati-varṣeṣu kathitā siddhi-
khecārī*
*nityābhīyukta-yogīśa[h] śīghram eva sa
siddhyati* (6.18)

A lord of yogins who is always engaged in practice succeeds very quickly; in twenty-seven years he attains liberation [lit. "moving in the sky (of consciousness)"].²²

Here we see a charismatic Guru causing the *śakti* to penetrate the disciple, triggering a number of mystical visions and other experiences that culminate eventually in liberation. Chapter 4 of the same text explains that the guru must himself have been penetrated by that Power of Rudra in order to have the capacity to awaken it in others (4.3). The evidence (*pratyaya*) for such a penetration, whether in Guru or disciple, comes in the form of direct experience, only sometimes of a nature apparent to others (but allegedly always apparent to a Guru). The text mentions a number of other signs or symptoms of the *śakti* in the body: loss of control

¹⁹ Em. Sanderson. (yogino as nominative with extended Aisha stem is attested elsewhere): *yoginā divyadarśanam* MS.

²⁰ Conj. Sanderson: *yoginī prathamam chāyāmātra*** MS.

²¹ Em. Sanderson: *dr̥ṣṭānaṣṭe* MS.

²² Note that *siddhikhecārī* may also mean here "the supernatural power of flight," though later exegetes take the expression as synonymous with liberation.

over one's body and involuntary movements (*stobha*, lit. "paralysis," here a technical term), visions (*darśhana*), trembling of the heart (*hrīdayam kampa*), the head spinning (*siraṇ cha bbramate*), the whole body whirling (*gbhūrmitā sarvvadeho'yam*), and sexual bliss caused by the Goddess (*ratyānanda-karī...parā*). One shakes, and is spontaneously moved to sing and dance (*kampanam geyanṛtyan*). The fact that at least some aspirants had spontaneous, uncontrolled, and possibly disturbing experiences of this kind can be seen in the fact that the text feels the need at this point to reassure the practitioner:

*teṣu teṣu na bhetavyam kṛṇāte
paramēśvarī
na ca bhūtapiśācābhyām na mohena ca
pīḍitāḥ*²³ (4.10c-11b)

In all these (signs), do not be afraid – the Supreme Goddess is playing. You are not afflicted by spirits and demons, nor are you going mad.

Possession

The reader will have already noticed that the character of these experiences has something akin to those of possession, and indeed the characteristic term used here is *avesha*, precisely the same term used for spirit possession (*bhūtaśeṣha*), often thought to be the cause of some illnesses in Ayurvedic medicine (e.g. *Charaka-saṃhitā* 6.3.123, where possession is said to cause tears,

trembling, terror, anger, agitation, etc.). Perhaps this is why the *Timirodghatana* hastens to assure the practitioner that spirits and demons are not involved here. Rather, this is a kind of beneficial possession. The text culminates its discussion of the signs by saying,

*rudra-śakti-samāveśam nityāveśam
acetanam
divya-devaiś ca saṃyogā[t]
paramānanda-kāraṇam* (4.15)

Possession [lit. entry] by Rudra's Power is the eternal inconceivable possession, causing supreme bliss due to union with the divine gods.

*bbukti-mukti-phala-pradā rudra-śakti-
samāveśam śabda-dṛṣṭiṣu
jāyate* (4.16bcd)

It gives the fruit of both enjoyment and liberation. Possession by Rudra's Power arises through the glances or words (of the Guru).

*jāyate br̥ṣṭi-tuṣṭiṇ ca sadā ānandam eva
ca* (4.18ab)
*kurute mala-vikāraṃ*²⁴ *bahu-janyā-
svayaṅkṛtām* (4.19cd)

Joy and contentment arise, and certainly permanent bliss. . . The transformation of impurity creates many instances of spontaneous happiness.

Salutary forms of alleged possession are well documented even in modern India, whereby local deities, usually goddesses, possess a human vehicle in order to advise and help their devotees, though they sometimes also show a capricious nature (see Waghorne and Dwyer).

²³ Em. VASUDEVA: *na ca bhūtapiśācām vā na mohena ca pīḍitā* MS.

²⁴ Em. Vasudeva restores metre: *kurute malavikāreṇa* MS.

However, as we shall see further, the *avesha* described here is of a different character from that documented in modern ethnographic studies. For in the latter, the personality of a deity inhabits its human vehicle, speaking through him or her, giving strongly worded advice to others or (as psychologists would have it) providing catharsis for the subject by allowing her to say what is normally disallowed. By contrast, in the Kaula and Trika texts, the *shakti* that enters appears more as an impersonal force or energy, despite the metaphorical use of language such as in 4.11 above. In many early passages, the term seems to make more sense when translated with something more like "infusion" or "pervasion" than "possession." This implication of an energetic force at work rather than a discrete agent partially explains why it is possible for Abhinavagupta to later reinterpret *samavesha* as "immersion" into the universal Power of Shiva rather than possession by it, an interpretation essential for him as a non-dualist. This semantic shift is also enabled by the ambiguity of Sanskrit compounds and the fact that the root *viś* from which *avesha* is derived can have an active or a passive sense, "enter" or "be entered" (as noted also by Torella [xxxii]). Further exploration of the primary sources is necessary to get a better sense of the meaning of this term in Tantrism.

Samavesha in Two Trika Texts

The concept of *samavesha* appears central to the doctrine of the *Malini-vijayottara-*

tantra, the text of the Trika that Abhinavagupta made the *locus classicus* (*mula-sbāstra*) of his theology and the purported basis of most of his works. The MVT argues that *samavesha* is the *sine qua non* for the type of charismatic Guru one should seek out for initiation. In describing such a guru, Shiva says in the MVT:²⁵

*yaḥ punaḥ sarva-tattvāni vetty etāni
yathārthataḥ
sa gurur mat-samaḥ prokto mantra-
vīrya-prakāśakaḥ* (2.10)

One who knows all the Principles of Reality exactly as they are is said to be a Guru, equal to Me, revealing the potency of (all) mantras.

*dr̥ṣṭāḥ sambhāsitās tena spr̥ṣṭās ca
prīta-cetasā
narāḥ pāpāiḥ pramucyante
sapta-janma-kṛtair api* (2.11)

Those people who he sees, converses with, or touches, pleased with them, are released from (the *karma* of) evil deeds of the past seven births.

*ye punar dīkṣitās tena prānināḥ
śiva-coditāḥ
te yatheṣṭam phalam prāpya gacchanti
paramam padam* (2.12)

Greater again are those living beings who, impelled by Shiva, are initiated by him. Having obtained whatever fruit they desire, they then go to the highest state.

*rudra-śakti-samāveśas tatra nityam
pratiṣṭhitāḥ
sati tasmimś ca cibnāni tasyaitāni
vilakṣayet* (2.13)

²⁵ Quoting from the critical edition of the text found in Vasudeva; translation mine.

The state of being infused with Rudra's Power is always established in him [the Guru]. When that (state arises), these are the signs that one should observe.

Here we see signs enumerated that are rather different from those mentioned in the *Timirodghatana*. There, the initial entry of the *śakti* in the disciple seemed effective, yet somewhat disorienting, wild, and uncontrolled. Here, in one who is constantly established in the state of *samavesha*, the signs are rather those of power and control. They exhibit greater constancy, and greater refinement. This may be because these signs refer to the liberated master, rather than one touched by *śakti* for the first time.

*tatraitat prathamam cibnam rudre
bhaktiḥ suniścalā
dvitīyam mantra-siddhiḥ syāt sadyaḥ-
pratīyaya-kārikā (2.14)*

This then is the first sign: steady devotion to Rudra. The second is (successful) attainment through mantra, giving immediate evidence (of its efficacy).

*sarva-sattva-vaśitvam ca tṛtīyam
lakṣaṇam smṛtam
prārabdha-kārya-niṣpattiś cibnam āhuś
caturthakam (2.15)*

And the third mark is taught as mastery over all beings.²⁶ The fourth sign, they say, is the accomplishment of (all) tasks that are begun.

*kavitvam pañcamam proktam
sālamkāram mano-haram
sarva-śāstrārtha-vetṛtṛtṛvam akasmāc
cāśya jāyate (2.16)*

The fifth is thought to be (the ability to write) well-ornamented, enchanting poetry, and knowing spontaneously the essential matters taught in all the scriptures.

In this description, the MVT is drawing on an earlier Trika text, from perhaps the seventh century, the *Doctrine of the Goddess of Perfected Yoga (Siddha-yogeshvari-mata-tantra* or SYM), sometimes quoted by Abhinavagupta under the name *Siddha-mata* ("the doctrine of the Perfect Goddess"). This archaic text also abounds in non-standard *Aiśha* forms and obscure practices. It also endorses the charismatic Guru, arguing that one should look for the marks of "divine behaviour" or signs of the entry of Rudra's Power before accepting a mantra (i.e., mantra-initiation) from him. It further states that it is specifically because of the pervasion of Rudra's Power in the Guru that it quickly and effectively comes alive in the disciple. I quote here from the critical edition of the existing text prepared by Judit Törzsök:

*tena dīkṣita-mātrasya bhaved
ātma-parigrahaḥ
tad-grahe mantra-sadbhāva-prāptir atra
varānane (2.3)*

Simply from being initiated by him (i.e. the type of Guru described below), "grasping of the Self" occurs. In our system, when one grasps it, one attains the essence of the mantra(s), O fair-faced lady.

In this text, (*pari*-)graha refers to some kind of mystical experience, here as a

²⁶ Note that two manuscripts of the MVT read -tattvavaśitvam, "mastery over all principles of reality," and this is the reading preferred by Abhinavagupta.

result of initiation by the charismatic Guru; an experience which itself yields *mantra-vīrya*, potency of mantras, a term which appears earlier (in Chapter 1 of the SYM), and indicates that mantras are enlivened and efficacious.

*rudra-śakti-samāveśād divyācaraṇa-
lakṣaṇam
ācārye lakṣayet tatra tato mantra-grahaḥ
smṛtaḥ* (2.4)

Due to infusion by the Power of Rudra, the signs of "divine behaviour" are observed in a master. When they are (observed), then it is taught that one may receive a mantra (from him).

*rudra-śakti-samāveśād ācāryasya
mahātmanah
śaktir utpadyate kṣipram
sadyaḥ-pratyaya-kārikā* (2.5)

Because of a great teacher's infusion by the Power of Rudra, that Power arises quickly (in the disciple), producing immediate evidence (of its arousal).

Clearly, here, the activation of *śakti* in a disciple is the result of contact with a master in whom the same Power is active. This is in contrast to the Shaiva Siddhanta materials we will examine below, where rather the Descent of Power is always the *prerequisite* for initiation, never a result of it. Though the word *śaktipata* does not appear in this passage, we see that *samavesha* is for Abhinavagupta Trika's equivalent to *śaktipata* in the context of initiation, e.g. in TA 13 and 29 and MVT 11. Following the above quoted passage, the SYM then lists exactly the same five marks of *samavesha* as seen above in the MVT, by which one may recognise a master, and goes on to say,

*evam lakṣaṇa-samyukto dīkṣābhijñō'tha
tattva-vit
gubhya-maṇḍala-sūtra-jñō
lokānugraha-kāraḥ
rudra-śakti-samāveśād bhaktānām
vāñchita-pradaḥ* (2.9cd-10)

Thus, one who is endowed with these marks, expert in initiation, a knower of the Truth, who knows how to draw the secret mandala, bestows grace on all people. Because of his possession of the Power of Rudra, he grants the wishes of his devotees.

*rudra-śakti-samāveśo yatrāyaṁ lakṣyate
priye
sa gurur mat-samaḥ prokto mantra-
vīrya-prakāśakaḥ* (2.11)

O dear one, the one in whom this infusion with the Power of Rudra is seen is said to be a Guru, equal to Me, revealing the power of mantras.

Note that the final line is echoed verbatim at MVT 2.10 cited above.

However, we see there the encroachment of the idea that gnosis (*jñana*) is the defining feature of a Guru, whereas here the attainment of a mystical state holds primacy. Nonetheless, *samavesha* is clearly central to both texts. MVT 2.17-24 goes on to describe fifty types of *samavesha*, inflected through three categories to yield 150, and says there are many more: that no matter how brief or extensive the treatment, the total would not be reached (2.24cd). What all these different types refer to is far from clear. Is each a distinct phenomenological category? They are not elaborated in detail in the exegetical literature. What is clear is that these Kaula and Kaula-influenced texts place great value on individual spiritual

experience, to the extent that they attempted to classify what must have been very subjective phenomena.

Initiation (*Diksha*)

Exhibiting the doctrinal flexibility that made the MVT such a useful text for Abhinavagupta, and allowed it to be cited by Saiddhantika authors as well, we see in its first chapter that one may seek a guru for initiation as a *result* of being entered by Shiva's Power, in consonance with the Saiddhantika view (see below). This demonstrates that there was not a fixed causal sequence in terms of the relationship between the *samavesha/shaktipata* experience and initiation; or perhaps we ought to understand the texts to mean that multiple such experiences were possible. One entry of *shakti*, then, compelled the aspirant to seek initiation, and in Kaula contexts, another, often stronger one, occurred as the result of being initiated by a charismatic master. Later initiations (such as *vedha-diksha*) could yield further descents of Power, as we will see. The MVT, in its first mention of initiation, gives a brief account of *rudra-shakti-samavesha* in varying degrees. This is the passage that Abhinava made the basis of his extensive analysis in TA 13 and *Tantrasara* 11.

*evam asyātmanah kāle kasmimścid
yogyatā-vaśāt
śaivī sambadhyate śaktiḥ śāntā
mukti-phala-pradā* (1.42)

Thus, at a particular time, because of a soul's fitness (for union with Shiva), it is connected with Shiva's peaceful/transcendent Power, which grants the fruit of liberation.

*tat-sambandhāt tataḥ kaścit tatkeṣanād
apavṛjyate
ajñānena sabaikatvaṁ kasyacid
vinivartate* (1.43)

Due to that connection, some souls are instantly liberated. For others, their oneness with ignorance comes to an end.

*rudra-śakti-samāviṣṭaḥ sa yiyāsuḥ
śiveccayā
bhukti-mukti-prasiddhyartham nīyate
sadgurum prati* (1.44)

Possessed by the Power of Rudra, through Shiva's will, one longs to go to a true Guru, for the sake of attaining enjoyment and liberation; (and) he is led to such a master.

*tam ārādhya tatas tuṣṭād dīkṣām āsādy
śaṅkarim
tatkeṣanād vopabhogād vā debapāte śivam
vrajet* (1.45)

Having pleased him, then – because of (the Guru's) satisfaction (with the signs of *samavesha* the supplicant displays) – he obtains the initiation of Shankara. He will go to Shiva [i.e. become liberated] when the body falls, either immediately or after (a period) of enjoyment (in one of Shiva's paradises).

*yoga-dīkṣām samāsādy jñātvā yogaṁ
samabhyaset
yoga-siddhim avāpnoti tad-ante śāśvatam
padam* (1.46)

Having obtained initiation into yoga, and having understood (its practice), he should practise yoga. He attains success in yoga, and after that, the eternal realm.

*anena krama-yogena samprāptaḥ
paramam padam
na bhūyaḥ paśutām eti śuddhe svātmani
tiṣṭhati* (1.47)

By these stages, he attains the supreme state. He will never again become a

bound soul; he will remain established in his own pure Self.

This important passage worked well for Abhinava as part of his theological agenda to establish a classification of different levels of Shaiva practitioners and masters, and of the spiritual practices (*sadhanas*) appropriate to each. For it clearly argues that *rudra-shakti-samavesha*, which Abhinava equates to *shaktipata*, itself may liberate, without any further initiation. It may also grant intuitive knowledge, removing the root of ignorance, and set the recipient on the "fast track" to liberation; this individual does not need initiation either, but rather soon becomes a Guru himself, of the *samsiddhika* or self-accomplished variety, and initiates others. It is only the third type of recipient (though presumably by far the most common) that seeks initiation, as a result of which he attains liberation at death. Others take initiation into yoga (*yoga-diksha*), which here indicates a practice to attain supernatural power (*yoga-siddhi*), followed by liberation. This whole schema, then, undermines the dominant Saiddhantika doctrine, whereby only the ritual of initiation itself may grant liberation. For the MVT, and for Abhinava, ritualistic initiation is only necessary for those with a weaker Descent of Power. This doctrine served to accommodate a broader range of observed social and religious phenomena, such as Gurus who did not have gurus of their own but nonetheless seemed spiritually powerful. This more comprehensive doctrine was thus more compelling and persuasive.

Kaula Initiation

As noted above, in Kaula contexts *samavesha* could occur within initiation. Therefore it behooves us to look at the Kaula form of the basic initiation ceremony that involved the experience of *samavesha/shaktipata*, as taught in the MVT. Here the charismatic Guru brings about a clearly verifiable form of "possession" that the MVT explicitly equates to *shaktipata*, causing a loosening of the bonds (*pasha*) of *mala*, *karma*, and *maya*, thus allowing the Guru to proceed with the liberating initiation. The basic forms of the ordinary Tantric Shaiva initiation ceremony are here, but reconfigured though the activated "Power of Rudra" to indicate a much more powerful and esoteric form of initiation.

*tataḥ śiṣyaṃ samābhūya babudhā
su-parīkṣitam
rudra-śaktyā tu samprokṣya devāgre
viniveśayet* (11.17)

Then, accepting a student who has been well examined in various ways, sprinkling him with (water infused with the mantra of) Rudra's Power, he [the guru] should bring him into the presence of the deity (i.e. the enlivened *mandala* or *murti* of the deity).

*bhujau tasya samālokyā rudra-śaktyā
pradīpayet
tayaivāpy arpayet puṣpaṃ karayor
gandha-digdhayoḥ* (11.18)

Focussing attention on the (initiant's) arms, he should stimulate them with the Power of Rudra. By it, (the initiant) will cast a flower from hands anointed with sandal paste.

Here the extraordinary quality of the Kaula Guru is connoted in the fact that

his concentrated gaze, conjoined with the power of his enlivened mantras, is sufficient to cause the *shakti* to come alive in the disciple's body, casting him into a state of "possession" strong enough that the *shakti* is understood to be in control. Thus the casting of the flower into the eight-segmented *mandala*, under the influence of the *shakti*, infallibly determinates which family of Mother-goddesses (*matr-kula*) he belongs to and will worship.

*nirālbambau tu tau dhyātvā śaktyākṛṣṭau
vicintayet
śakti-mantrita-netreṇa baddhvā netre tu
pūrvavat* (11.19)

Meditating on (the disciple's arms) as "unsupported" (by him), he should contemplate them as being attracted by the *shakti*, (thereby) binding the eyes with an blindfold consecrated by *shakti* as before.

The disciple's arms are not supported, i.e. controlled, by him, but rather by the *shakti*, and therefore his movements, such as putting on the blindfold, are involuntary. Note that in the normal form of the ritual, such as found in the *Siddhanta-sara-paddhati* and *Soma-sambhu-paddati*, there is no "possession," and the guru simply applies the blindfold himself.

*tataḥ prakṣepayet puṣpaṁ sā śaktis
tat-kara-sthitā
yatra tat patate puṣpaṁ tat-kulam tasya
lakṣayet* (11.20)

Then, the *shakti* in (the disciple's) hands will cause (him) to throw the flower.

Wherever the flower falls, that (place) signifies his family.

This is the proper order, and the mention in 11.18 was a foreshadowing. Here the *shakti* as agent is explicitly stated.

*mukham udgbhāṭya taṁ paścāt pādayoḥ
pratipātayet
tato'sya mastake cakram hastayoś cārcya
yogavit* (11.21)

Uncovering his face (and seeing the *mandala*), She [the *shakti*] causes him to fall at the (guru's) feet; then that knower of yoga (i.e., the guru) worships the circuit (of goddesses) on (the disciple's) head and two hands.

The implication of the causative verb is clearly that the disciple falls because he is overwhelmed by the *shakti* contained in the initiatory *mandala* into which he has just cast a flower; the falling is considered evidence of the ceremony's efficacy.²⁷

*tadd-bastau prerayec chaktyā yāvan
mūrdhāntam āgatau
śiva-basta-vidhiḥ proktaḥ sadyaḥ-
pratyaya-kāraḥ* (11.22)

With the *shakti*, he should impel (the disciple's) two hands to come up to his head. This is called the ceremony of Shiva's hand, which produces immediate evidence (of its efficacy).

In the ordinary initiation ritual, the guru ritually installs the mantra-deities on his own hand and worships them there before placing it, blazing with energy, on the disciple's head (see standard

²⁷ On falling down as an indication of penetration by the *shakti*, see also Kaulajnananiraya 16.49a-51c and 22.7ab., cited in White's *Kiss of the Yogini* (103-4).

accounts in *Dikshottara* 7.110 and *Somashambhu-paddhati* 4.2.123). Here, the initiand's hand becomes the "*Shiva-basta*" (known in some sources as *shakti-basta* or *devi-basta*), and it spontaneously rising to his head is considered sufficient evidence of the continuing success of the ceremony. Note the preoccupation with "evidence" (*pratyaya*) in these scriptural Trika and Kaula texts, signifying their concern with verifying that something was actually happening in the subjective experience of the aspirant. Indeed it is the phrase *sadyaḥ-prayaya-kāraka*, "producing immediate evidence," that is nearly ubiquitous in Shaiva and Shakta texts, rather than the formal conceptual category of *shaktipata*. What is of central importance for the thesis of this essay, though, is that evidence of some kind of internal experience was a universal prerequisite for the initiation rite; *shaktipata* is simply the codification of that requirement. Abhinavagupta's theology further stressed the importance of internal experience matching or transcending external practice, thus resisting the trends towards routinisation normal in the growth of a religion. It is significant that *pratyaya* also means "conviction," and that Abhinava's commentator Jayaratha equates *avesha* with *pratyaya*, thus making it explicit that this mystical experience of "infusion" or "immersion" was the key piece of evidence (*Tantraloka-viveka ad* 29.271).

Then the disciple is given the sacred food of the oblation (*charu*), which the MVT says may be made from dates and so on (*kharjuradi-phalodbhavam*) but Abhinava takes to be of transgressive

character. The disciple, still under the influence of the *shakti*, consumes it. These signs are taken as evidence that a Descent of Power has occurred, thus linking *samavesha* and *shaktipata* explicitly, in the MVT's only usage of the latter term.

*eteṣāṃ cālanān mantrī śakti-pātāni
parīkṣayet* (11.26)

Because of the loosening of these (bonds), the Mantra-master (i.e., Guru) may verify the Descent of Power (that the disciple has received).

*manda-tīvrādi-bhedena
manda-tīvrādikād budbhaḥ
ity ayaṃ samayī proktaḥ samsthitoktena
vartmanā* (11.27)

He is awakened due to (a Descent of Power of) mild, intense, and (medium) (grades), (multiplied) by the subdivisions of mild, intense, and (medium). Thus he has become an "ordinary initiate" (*samayi*) in the manner described.

This is the first time this specific classification is introduced, elaborated at length by Abhinavagupta (see below). This, then, has been a very brief summary of the basic form of initiation (*samaya-diksha*) in the Kaula context, or rather the points on which it differs from the normal form of the ritual given in great detail in the ritual manuals (*paddhati*). The MVT then goes on to briefly describe the process of the main form of initiation, the *nirvana-diksha*, in terms that correspond with known forms of the ritual: the Guru purifies the initiand's *karma* destined to come to fruition on all the levels of reality, through the microcosm of the disciple's body, and unites him to Shiva. However,

then the MVT adds a specifically Kaula classification of mystical experience that here occurs as a result of the *nirvana-diksha*:

*lakṣayec cihna-saṅgbhātam ānandādikam
ādarāt
ānanda udbbavaḥ kampo nidrā ghūrṇis
ca pañcamī* (11.35)

He should carefully note the collection of signs beginning with bliss: Bliss, Ascent, Trembling, Yogic Sleep, and Whirling as the fifth.

These are evidence that the ritual has been effective, and the more of them that are observed, the stronger the "entered Power" (*avishta shakti*) is determined to be. The MVT may here be drawing on the Kaula text entitled *The Kaula Ocean of Waves* (*Urmi-kaul-arnava* or *UKA*) that contains this classification. The *UKA* is another early Kaula text, so far unedited and unpublished, which is unfortunate as it is in a highly corrupted state.²⁸ It describes a ceremony called "transference by penetration (of *shakti*)" or *vedha-saṅkramana*, in which signs similar to those already described, such as "a flower in the hand of the disciple spontaneously (i.e. involuntarily) rising to his head" (*śiṣya-basta-gaṭam puṣpaṃ svayam āruhya mastake*), indicate that the disciple's metaphysical bonds are loosened and he has attained *avesha* (*pracalanti mahā-pāśā āveśam tasya jāyate*). The same five mystical states (*avasthas*) named at MVT 11.35 are listed, in the same order, and the text asserts that the "Shakta

wisdom" (*shakta vijnana*) arises in one who has experienced them. A variety of other signs are also enumerated, such as the occurrence of spontaneous laughter and sacred hand gestures (*basyamudrod-bhavam*), poetry (*kavyam*), horripilation (*romancha*), "paralysis" (*stobha*), convulsion (*vikshobha*), acting as if drunk (*kshivanam*), and frequently suddenly plunging into contemplative trance (*nānā bhāvanānuplavas*, note unusual usage). The charismatic Guru is also stressed here. In fact, if he is sufficiently powerful, he need not even be present to affect the transference of *shakti* into the disciple.

*sa gurur mokṣadaḥ samyak karoti yadi
siddhi-dam*

He is a Guru who grants liberation if he correctly gives this attainment.

*mano-dhyānena saṅkramyaṃ yojanānām
śatair api*

It may be transferred through mental concentration even from hundreds of leagues (away).

*tīvra-śakti-nipātena samyag-
gurvāvalokanāt vedhayen
nātra sandehaḥ*

By the intense Descent of Power due to the glance of a true Guru, he may cause the "piercing" (of the disciple by *shakti*) here, without doubt.

In this text, then, the terms *avesha*, *shaktipata*, and *vedha* are used more or less interchangeably. The important thing is that Shiva's Power is activated and manifested within the disciple. As the very etymology of the word *shakti*

²⁸ I am grateful to Professor Sanderson for his transliteration of key passages from the original manuscript, and help with my attempts at understanding it. The manuscript is from the National Archives in Nepal, NAK 5.5207, and the quotations here are drawn from ff19v3-20r6.

implies efficacy and capability, it is not surprising that these power-centred Shakta cults were rather more concerned with evidence that their rituals and yoga were actually working than their counterparts in the Shaiva Siddhanta, who did not need or expect any visible signs of the efficacy of their initiation until the time of death.

Abhinavagupta elaborates on the Kaula ritual described in MVT 11 in the twenty-ninth chapter of his *Tantraloka*, immediately after describing the infamous *kula-yaga* or Kaula sexual rite. He quotes and paraphrases MVT 11.17-21 (above), then gives the mantra which is to be installed on the disciple's hand (TA 192c-194), then states:

*kara-stobho netra-pāṭa-grahāt prabhṛti
yaḥ kila
danta-kāṣṭha-samādāna-paryantas tatra
lakṣayet
tīvra-mandādi-bhedena śakti-pātaṁ
tathāvidham* (29.196-7b)

Tradition says the (degree of success in the) "paralysis" of the hand – from grasping the blindfold to taking up the tooth-stick – should be noted as intense, weak, and so on (to determine) the Descent of Power of the corresponding degree.

Here Abhinava makes explicit the link between what were formerly considered rites of possession and the mystical descent of energy which indicates a successful inauguration to the Tantric spiritual path. He uses the word "paralysis" (*stobha*) in the Kaula sense, indicating the giving way of the initiand's conscious control over his limbs and the entering of divine Power ("his own energy, which is mundane and

artificial (compared to the divine *śakti*) has melted away" as Jayaratha describes it here [*vigalita-sāmsārika-kṛtrima-nija-śaktikatvāt*]). The "tooth-stick" is a part of the ritual not covered above for lack of space; it is simply the final action of the disciple under the influence of the *śakti*. The implication in the above quotation seems to be that if the disciple performs all the requisite actions correctly in due sequence while under the influence of the *śakti*, the Descent is discerned to be strong (*tīvra*), but if only some of them are done in this trance state or done imperfectly, it is medium or weak. He also cites the *Urmi-kaul-arnava* (under the name *Bhoga-hastaka*) to support the idea that the "paralysis of the hand" (*kara-stobha*) qualifies the initiand as an ordinary-level initiate (*samayin*) in the Kaula context.

Whereas the MVT then directly goes on to outline the more important *nirvana-diksha* ceremony, Abhinava pauses to consider what qualifies a person for a *nirvana-diksha* immediately after the *samaya-diksha*. The key element, he argues, is the initiand's capacity to throw off dualistic perception and see anything and everything as a manifestation of Shiva. Therefore, while the sacred food offering or oblation (*charu*) is described in the MVT as non-transgressive (see above), Abhinava – more explicitly and radically non-dualist than that text – describes a transgressive offering. The manner in which the initiand receives it indicates the extent to which he he shaken off the notions of "pure and impure" and therefore his fitness (*yogyata*) for the main initiation.

*carveva vā gurur dadyād vāmāmṛta-
pariplutam* (29.198cd)
*niḥśaṅkaṁ grahaṇāc chakti-gotro
māyoyjhibho bhavet
sakampas tv ādadānaḥ syāt samayī
vācanādiṣu* (29.199)

The Guru should give (the initiand) that very oblation, submerged in the “nectar of the left” [i.e. wine]. If he takes it without inhibition or hesitation, he becomes a member of a clan of *śakti*, freed from the realm of differentiation (*māya*). However, if he should tremble while receiving it, he is an ordinary initiate (*samayin*), (and should take up a practice of) reciting and (hearing the scriptures).

Jayaratha clarifies in his commentary that the oblation consists of the “Five Jewels” or trace amounts of urine (*śivambu*), semen (*retas*), menstrual fluid (*raktam*), phlegm (*nalajyam*), and faeces (*viśva-nirgamah*),²⁹ which explains why the candidate’s hand might tremble. If one takes it unhesitatingly, knowing it to be nothing but a form of his own consciousness, it indicates that he has reached a level of awareness free of the ordinary methods of interpreting the world through discursive, differentiated mental constructs, and instead possesses a consciousness formed solely from the immediacy of direct perception (Jayaratha: *sākṣāt-kṛtāvikalpa-nirupāya-samvit-tattvaḥ*). One who cannot yet make that leap does not continue with the ceremony, but undertakes the duties of a *samayin*, foremost among them hearing, reciting, and contemplating the scriptures of the non-dual Kaula Trika (as Abhinava would have it). Jayaratha

adds that when such a person has received a strong Descent of Power, as demonstrated by his capacity for scrupulously observing the duties and practices of an ordinary initiate as described in various scriptural works (*tat-tac-chāstrīya-samaya-paripālana-sūcīta-tīvra-śaktipātaḥ*), then may he be initiated as a “Son” (*putraka*, the name for one who has received *nirvana-diksha*). Here we see that strong devotion and commitment may also be taken as a sign of the Descent of Power, though this clearly needs to be demonstrated over a longer period.

If the candidate has qualified him or herself, he or she may be initiated with the *nirvana-diksha*. If he did not pass the test, and there is no other sign of a strong infusion of *śakti*, the initiand has one more chance. The Guru may burn away his (mental) impurities by forcefully installing the *Malini* mantra in him. The efficacy of such is proven by the disciple’s collapse. However, if even this is ineffective, the disciple “should be abandoned like a stone” (*tam atropalavat tyajet* [TA 29.210-11ab]), as no Descent has occurred, because the candidate is too “dense” (*nibida, jadiman* [Jayaratha *ad. loc.*]). Here we have an explicit statement that even candidates who have already received the basic initiation and have begun the process of the main initiation are to be denied admittance to the ranks of the fully-fledged Shaivas if they have had no inner experience of Shiva’s grace. This is a distinctly Kaula position, attempting to preserve the “spiritual” status of the elite religion over and against the pressures

²⁹ The translation of several of these terms is indebted to Sanderson (see “Meaning in Tantric Ritual” 82).

towards routinisation to which it, like all religions, was subject.

Abhinava then quotes and paraphrases MVT 11.28-34, which outlines the *nirvana-diksha* ceremony, ending with the description of the five mystic states that may result from the Descent of Power triggered by this sacred initiation in its Kaula form.

*anayā śodhyamānasya śiśos
tīvrādi-bhedaṭaḥ
śakti-pātāc citi-vyoma-prāṇanāntar-
bahis-tanūḥ* (29.207)
*āviśantī rudra-śaktiḥ kramāt sūte
phalam tv idam
ānandam udbhavam kampan nīdrām
ghūrṇim ca dehaḡām* (29.208)

As a result of a Descent of Power in one of its varieties such as intense, the Power of Rudra enters the consciousness, void, vital breath, inner body, or outer body of the disciple being purified by Her, and gives rise to these results respectively: Bliss, Ascent, Trembling, Yogic Sleep, and Whirling in the body.

Here Abhinava introduces the pentadic classification of the layers of an individual being, drawing on the *Stanzas on the Recognition of the Lord* (*Ishvara-pratyabhijna-kavika* or IPK 3.8, 3.22-28) authored by his teacher's teacher in the Doctrine of Recognition (*pratyabhijna-shastra*), Utpaladeva. Thus in Abhinava's unique analysis, which of the five mystic states the initiand exhibits indicates to the Guru on what level of his being the *śakti* was activated, and thus by extension how strong the Descent was. "Consciousness" here refers to the pure non-discursive awareness of the innermost Self (*sakshad-atman*), the true locus of identity. Its nature is bliss, so

activation of the *śakti* on this level triggers bliss (*ananda*). The "void" refers to the deepest level of self bar one, the locus of states of total unconsciousness; activation of the *śakti* here creates an inner expansiveness, referred to as "ascent" (*udbhava*). The vital breath or life-force (*prana*), also called the "inner sensation" (*antara-sparsha*), refers to the internal, breath-governed bodily energies that control many functions of the body on both physical and subtle levels. Because of this, activation of the *śakti* on this level causes physical trembling or trembling in the heart. The "inner body" is the subtle body consisting of the energies of the senses, the mind, the ego, and most importantly the faculty of discernment and intuition (*buddhi*) which is its core. When *śakti* is activated here, because of a cessation of ordinary discursive and analytical cognition, the initiand enters a sleep-like state. Finally, *śakti* penetrating the physical body causes a giddy sensation of whirling, falling, drifting, or spinning. Such, then, were the interpretations of the physiological components of the initiand's religious experience. The Guru, noting directly through one or more of these signs that his disciple's initiation has been accomplished, is said to be encouraged and gratified (*evam hi sākeśād asya dīkṣā vṛtteti guror āśvāso bhaved*). This statement and much of the foregoing paragraph draws on Jayaratha's commentary on the above verses.

In a masterful stroke that exhibits his general exegetical strategy, Abhinava has here assimilated Kaula symptoms of possession to ontological categories of the refined Pratyabhijna philosophy, two

branches of the tradition that (textually at least) are polar opposites in terms of sophistication of articulation and abstract philosophical thought. Further, he assimilates the categories remarkably coherently, implying to his readers the coherence of the entire Shaiva revelation, which merely needs the work of a skilled exegete to explicate the correspondences and interrelated cohesion of meaning that are implicitly already present. It is particularly important to him to integrate the insights of the Recognition school, as the lucidity and sophistication of its reasoning and interpretation of religious categories helped to elevate the Trika into the highest realm of philosophical discourse. Its doctrine was absorbed by the Trika and added an esoteric dimension, making it more compelling for its growing following of householder practitioners. Note, for example, the definition of *samavesha* offered by the IPK:

*mukhyatvam kartṛtāyās tu bodhasya ca
cid-ātmanah
śunyādau tad-guṇe jñānam tat
samāveśa-lakṣaṇam* (3.23)

That gnosis of the primacy of the Conscious Self as the true Knower and Agent, and of (the other layers of individuality,) the "void" and so on, as mere attributes of it, is called *samavesha*.

Thus *samavesha* is here defined as an intuitive insight that the true locus of identity is not the body, mind, vital energy, or void, with consciousness as a mere epiphenomenal adjunct of one of these, but rather that Consciousness itself is the Self, and the other levels of identity are projections of it. This is precisely the meaning Abhinava wants

and advocates, and he argues that in fact all forms of religious practice and ritual have this liberating insight as their goal. (See his *-vimarshini* and *-vivṛiti-vimarshini* on this verse.) This might be thought a total reinvention of the term *samavesha* from what we have seen thus far, but in fact through the dual sense of the root *viś* ("enter"), the valid meaning given here is that of *immersion*, that is, entry into one's true nature. And of course Abhinava still preserves the discourse around *śakti* by suggesting that this immersion is made possible by the activation of the divine power within the disciple. Despite the renderings of *avesha* given further above, speaking of *śakti* as "entering" is of course metaphorical in all but the earliest, virtually undocumented cultic contexts where literal possession was thought to be taking place. Even the dualists took the term "Descent of Power" to be metaphorical, as we see below.

***Śaktipata*: the Shaiva Siddhanta View**

The final textual layer to be examined before concluding with a careful examination of Abhinavagupta's own thoughts is that of the Shaiva Siddhanta. This school, originally dualistic, worshipped Sadashiva non-transgressively and without the Goddess, and believed in the efficacy of ritual over that of knowledge. It was the first of the Tantric sects to produce texts written in (mostly) coherent Sanskrit with some degree of intellectual sophistication. They were highly influential, and many of their doctrines (such as that of the *tattvas* or principles of reality) espoused in key texts such as

the *Collection of Aphorisms of the Self-Born One* (*Svayambhuva-sutra-sangraha*) were adopted and adapted by other groups, including the Trika. Because of this textual primacy, Abhinava spends a considerable amount of time in his work refuting those Saiddhantika views that were incompatible with his theology, most notably that *mala* (the basic impurity which is the cause of individual bondage) is a substance, that only ritual can remove it and thus liberate, and that Shiva and the individual soul (*anu*, *pashu*) are eternally separate and distinct.

The Shaiva Siddhanta texts also address the concept of the Descent of Power in the context of initiation. For them, however, the relationship between the two is clearly causal, and only in one direction. That is, *shaktipata* is a prerequisite for the granting of initiation, because the officiant (*guru*, *acharya*) must be convinced that he is proceeding in accordance with Shiva's will. Therefore he looks for signs that it has occurred before accepting the supplicant. The signs detailed in the texts occasionally accord with those of the MVT, but show a more exoteric form of the religion. In the *Mrigendra-tantra*, one of the original Saiddhantika texts, we read in its "Knowledge Section:"

*yeṣāṃ śarīriṇāṃ śaktiḥ pataty api
nirvṛttaye
teṣāṃ tal-lingam autsukyaṃ muktau
dveṣo bhava-sthitau* (5.4)
*bhaktiś ca śiva-bhakteṣu śraddhā
tac-chāśake vidhau* (5.5ab)

Those embodied souls on whom Power descends, for the cessation (of their bondage), show these signs: eagerness for liberation; aversion to remaining in the world of transmigration; devotion towards the devotees of Shiva; faith in their Teacher and rites.

In other words, simply taking a strong interest in religion is a sufficient sign of *shaktipata*. The *Matanga-parameshvara* adds: "Steady devotion is the clear sign of the Descent (of Power)" (*Charya-pada* 4.10cd).³⁰ These broader requirements clearly create a stronger base for increasing the sect's numbers and influence, and also produces a less elitist and esoteric group of initiates than we saw in the Trika. The *Svayambhuva-sutra-sangraha* gives more detail on the process set in motion by the Descent of Power.

*tan-nipātāt kṣaraty asya malaṃ
samsāra-kāraṇam
kṣīṇe tasmin yiyāsā syāt param
niḥśreyasam prati* (1.17)
*sa deśikam anuprāpya dīkṣā-
vichinna-bandhanah
prayāti śivasāyujyam nirmalo
nirupaplavaḥ* (1.18)

Because of its descent, it erodes one's impurity, which is the cause of transmigration. When that has waned, the desire to go to the highest, unsurpassed beatitude (arises). Having obtained a guide (= *guru*), his bonds cut by initiation, he attains equality with Shiva, free from impurity and affliction.³¹

³⁰ These citations drawn from Sanderson's "The Doctrine of the *Malinivijayottaratantra*" (286), translations mine.

³¹ Reading *nirupaplavaḥ* for the unattested *niranuplavaḥ*.

Note that this is slightly at variance with the later Saiddhantika orthodoxy that only ritual can affect impurity (*mala*). Here Shiva's power (not personified as in the Trika) erodes the impurity sufficiently to give one the discernment to perceive the value of and seek out a Shaiva guru for initiation. Still, it is initiation alone that liberates.

The Saiddhantika *Kirana-tantra* seems to have been the first text to address possible philosophical objections to the concept of *shaktipata*. It also proposed a theory for the problematic question of why *shaktipata* happens when it does, a theory Abhinava found absurd and refuted in the TA and TS. The fact that he thought it important enough to refute, however, shows that it must have gained some currency. The entire fifth chapter of the *Kirana* ("Ray of Light") is devoted to the topic of *shaktipata*. It begins with the *purva-pakshin's* objection:³²

*śakti-pātād bhaved dīkṣā; nīpāto na
vibhūtvataḥ
śivasya samavetatvāt sarvadaiva sthitā
paśau* (5.1)

Initiation occurs because of a Descent of Power; (but) there can be no "descent," due to the fact that it is all-pervasive. Because it inheres in Shiva, (and Shiva is all-pervasive, it must be the case that) it is established always in the individual soul.

For perhaps the first time, a technical term that dated from the time of possession rites when doctrines such as *vibhūtvā* (all-pervasiveness) were not

universally established is confronted as philosophically problematic. The raising and subsequent exegetical resolution of new questions and problems that arise due to a gradual shift in doctrines is characteristic of the Tantric literature, especially on the commentarial level.

*bhagavān uvāca
upacāreṇa śabdānām pravṛttir iba dṛśyate
yathā pumān vibhūr gantā nityo'py ukto
vinaśvaraḥ* (5.3)
*pāśa-cchedo yathā prokto mantra-rād
bhagavān chivaḥ
evam śakti-nīpāto'pi procyate sopacārataḥ*
(5.4)

The Blessed Lord said: Here we see an employment of words with a figurative usage. Just as an individual soul is said to move, though it is all-pervasive, and said to be perishable, though it is eternal, just as a "cutting of bonds" is taught, and Lord Shiva is said to be "king of mantras," in the same way, though a "descent" of Power is taught, it is with figurative usage.

*nīpāto bhaya-do yad-vad vastunaḥ
sahasā bhavet
tad-vac chakti-nīpāto'pi prokto
bhava-bhaya-pradaḥ* (5.5)
*tasmād anyatra yāty eva tathātmā
deśikaṁ prati*

["Why this particular figurative usage?"] Just like the sudden falling of an object can create fear, in the same way the Descent of Power is described as granting fear of mundane worldly existence. Because of it, such a person goes somewhere, to (find) a guide.³³

³² Quoting here from the excellent critical edition prepared by Dominic Goodall of the IFP; translations mine. Note that this text, like many Tantras, features unusual syntax and grammar.

³³ Or one may read: "One goes away from it (a falling object); in the same way, the soul (goes) towards a guide" (cf. Goodall 331).

*gurur yathāgrataḥ śiṣyān suptān daṇḍena
bodhayet* (5.6)

*śivo'pi moha-nidrāyām suptān chaktyā
prabodhayet*

yadā svarūpa-vijñānam patiteti tadocyate
(5.7)

Just as a master awakens sleeping disciples in front (of him) with a stick, Shiva too, with his power, awakens those asleep in the sleep of delusion. When one has understanding of one's true nature, then it is said to have "fallen."

*tasmāc chakti-nipātaḥ syān nipātaś
cibha-vācakah*

Therefore it is a descent of power. (This) "fall" expresses (certain) signs [see below].

*tan-nipātasya saḥ kālaḥ karmaṇām
tulyataiva ca* (5.8)

And the time of its descent is the equilibrium of (two) *karmas*.

Here the doctrine of *karma-samya* is introduced. This theory attempts to account for the seemingly arbitrary way in which *shaktipata* can occur at different times to different people. It postulates that once in a very great while, two discrete bits of *karma* that are of exactly equal strength and opposing nature come to fruition at precisely the same moment, creating an impasse whereby all experience must cease for the subject. This creates a "rent in time" (*kala-cchidram*), the opportunity Shiva has been waiting for and which he instantly seizes, releasing his power to unblock the *karmas*, and further taking advantage of the situation by initiating in the subject the religious experience connoted by *shaktipata* in order to release that soul from suffering, an event which cannot take place within the normal karmic framework. This theory

is unsatisfactory not so much because it is completely unverifiable (a modern objection), but because it did not change the arbitrary character of *shaktipata*.

What it did do, however, was preserve the notion of *shaktipata* as a kind of divine grace (*anugraha*), as the recipient cannot earn it through the normal set-up of the karmic system. It must be noted here that Ramakantha, one of the main voices of the commentarial Siddhanta, and a near-contemporary of Abhinava, did not accept the *karma-samya* theory but rather advocated the *mala-paripaka* theory, that of the "ripening of innate impurity," whereby when Shiva sees that the impurity of a given individual has "ripened" and is ready to be removed, he initiates his *shaktipata*. Ripening takes place through the dedicated practice of exoteric Shaiva religion, virtuous conduct, and so on. This removes the problem of arbitrariness and introduces the problem of partiality and merit. This theory is unknown to the *Kirana*, and thus Ramakantha must engage in verbal gymnastics to try to represent it in the text, under the onus of the general cultural idea that doctrine does not change, therefore the point at issue must be hidden somewhere in the scriptural text. Abhinava also deals with the *mala-paripaka* theory below.

*evam sūkṣam samānatvam yasmin kāle
tadaiva sā* (5.9cd)

*sva-rūpam dyotayaty āśu bodha-cibha-
balena vai* (5.10ab)

Thus when this imperceptible equality (of actions arises), at that very moment (Shiva's) power illumines one's own nature suddenly, (an illumination discernable) through the signs of awakening.

*samatve sati yo bhogaḥ katham tasya
prajāyate* (5.11ab)

When there is an equality [i.e. equal opposition of *karmas*], how can one's experience which (is their fruit) arise?

*sa pāta iti mantavyas tasya bhaktir
vilakṣaṇā* (5.13cd)

That should be understood as (the cause of) a "descent." Exceptional devotion arises in one (who has experienced it).

*kāla eva sa niṣṇātaḥ śakter
ātma-parigrahaḥ
anādi-karma-sambandhāc chivaḥ kālam
apekṣate* (5.14)

That very time is "proficient," as it is a gracing of the soul by the power (of the Lord). Because (the soul) is connected to beginningless *karma*, Shiva waits for that time.

That is, because *karma* is beginningless, there is no earlier opportunity for Shiva to show his grace. This idea is in direct opposition to Abhinavagupta's theology, for he stresses the absolute freedom and independence (*svatantriya*) of the Lord as one of his inherent qualities, along with those of consciousness and bliss. The Saiddhantika doctrine, for Abhinava, constitutes a limitation of God, whose very nature is necessarily completely unlimited and boundless.

Shaktipata in Abhinavagupta's Theology

Of all the Kashmiri Shaiva exegetes, Abhinava writes most extensively on the topic of *shaktipata*, for it is key to his theology. With his typology of nine levels of the Descent of Power, drawn from the brief mention in the MVT, he can accommodate and account for a wider range of observed religious

experience, as well as privilege his doctrine of liberation through knowledge without the necessity of ritual. Thus he argues that some attain liberation as a direct result of *shaktipata*, without the intermediary of the guru or the ritual he supplies, becoming "self-revealed" Gurus in their own right, possessing great power and charisma. Others approach a Guru as a result of their *shaktipata*, but need only the briefest contact with him to attain the highest state. The Gurus discussed in this context are of the charismatic type we saw in the Kaula materials and the MVT, for the initiation they give may be of a formal, ritual character, or it may be a direct transmission of energy through a mere touch or word. Others receive *shaktipata* of the type described in the Saiddhantika materials, that leads them to take initiation and perform spiritual practice (*abhyasa*), attaining liberation at the time of death. Still others, the lowest category, receive the Descent but still desire worldly enjoyment and powers (indeed, this desire is the reason their *shaktipata* is weaker), and they become power-seeking *sadhakas*, yet still attain liberation, generally in their next incarnation. Thus we see here another example of Abhinava's strategy of inclusive hierarchies, which made his theology so compelling originally. Everyone is thus accounted for, different types of experience explained, while simultaneously guiding the reader towards the conclusion that liberating insight is the highest among them.

The inclusive hierarchy also appears in Abhinava's discussion of other religions and soteriological paths. He holds that each of these grants the goal that it promises, but that these goals fall

short of the highest liberation and most complete expansion, reaching as they do to levels of reality (*tattvas*) that, though elevated, are still part of the Shaiva "impure universe" (*ashuddhabdhan*).

Because his is effectively a monotheistic theology, Abhinava must describe the limited forms of grace received by those on lower paths as emanating ultimately from Shiva:

The various (divine) forms such as Vishnu and so on, which exist within God as (aspects) of his own nature, are established within the realm of *maya* through his magical power of differentiation. Therefore, though a *shaktipata* exists in connection with these forms, it can only grant experience up to a certain point [maximally, the level on which those deities are established], not the divine state of Shiva. (TA 13.268cd-70ab)

However, he allows that it is entirely possible that these lower-grade *shaktipatas* will successively lead one to higher and higher paths and corresponding states of being, either within a lifetime or over the course of several.

Another fascinating feature of Abhinava's account here is the unique understanding of *shaktipata* in the context of radical non-dualism. Abhinava eliminates the two logical problems of arbitrariness and partiality, grappled with by the other commentators, by explaining that it is the Lord himself, exercising his powers of either Obscuration (*tirobhava*) or Grace (*anugraha*), who chooses to either stay contracted in the form of one individual, or expand to the perfect fullness of divine realisation in the form

of another. It is an independent choice, an expression of his inherent power of absolute freedom (*svatantriya-shakti*), and thus there is no dualistic God with whom to find fault. It is when the Lord in the form of an individual soul is ready to begin the process of expanding into his original state that *shaktipata* occurs. We saw above that the MVT alluded vaguely to a "particular time" when that took place. Abhinava explains this in his commentary on MVT 1.42 which occurs in Chapter 13 of the *Tantraloka*:

The "particular time" (*kala*) which is referred to is that of a particular activity (*kalana*), consisting of awareness, directed toward one's own nature. The "fitness" or "appropriateness" (*yogyata*, in MVT 1.42) is in our philosophy said to be the quality of being worthy for the spiritual process (*yoga*) of identification with Shiva. Thus the question "Why (did it happen) only then, why not before?" is not appropriate. For aside from manifesting in this way, there is no occasion (for the Descent of Power) whatsoever. But when (his Power) does shine forth in this way, due to his freedom, the power of time cannot contradict his expansion, being simply a form of his majesty, arising within Shiva. (13.204-7b)

Only here in Abhinava's theology does *shaktipata* appear as a religious experience which the recipient draws to himself, as opposed to something that happens *to* him. Thus he deftly disposes of the logical problems of the earlier theories.

To make our understanding of Abhinava's views on *shaktipata* complete, we present here a complete translation of Chapter 11 of the

Tantrasara, together with a few select verses from *Tantraloka* 13 that clarify particular points. Further discussion of the topic appears at appropriate places below. First, a note on the text: the TS is written in a terse prose style that necessitates frequent parenthetical insertions to fill out the grammar of the English. As above, I use parentheses to enclose phrases not directly stated in the Sanskrit, but unambiguously implied by its structure. The reader who is not fluent in Sanskrit may simply read through these parentheses as if they were not there. Square brackets, then, are used for my occasional explanatory or editorial comments. My understanding of the chapter was of course assisted by the corresponding chapter in *Tantraloka*. Also note that the Sanskrit text, drawn from the KSTS edition, is transcribed as found there, with proper *sandhi* irregularly applied.

Tantrasara: Ekadasham Abnikam

*tatra yāvat idam uktam tat sākṣāt kasyacit
apavargāptaye yathokta-saṅgraha-nītyā
bhavati, kasyacit vakṣyamāṇa-dīkṣāyām
upayoga-gamanāt. iti dīkṣādikam
vaktavyam | tatra kaḥ adbhikārī iti
nirūpanārtham śaktipāto vicāryate |*

Regarding (the teachings on the structure of reality in Chapter 10), someone could attain liberation directly through following all that has been taught up to this point. For others, it comes about due to understanding the usefulness regarding initiation, which will be explained below. Thus initiation and what follows it has to be taught. On this point, (we must ask) who is

qualified (for initiation)? In order to ascertain the answer to this question, we will investigate (the topic of) the Descent of Power.

*tatra kecit ābuh jñānābbhāvāt ajñāna-mūlaḥ
saṁsāraḥ, tad-apagame jñānodayāt,
śaktipāto iti teṣaṁ samyak-jñānodayaḥ eva
kim-kṛta iti vācyaṁ*

On this topic, some say that because of an absence of knowledge, the cycle of worldly suffering, which has ignorance as its root, exists. When that ignorance is removed, due to the arising of spiritual knowledge, it is termed *śaktipāto*. For people who argue thus, (*śaktipāto*) is simply the arising of correct knowledge. We object that what ought to be addressed is, how is that accomplished?

*karma-janyatve karma-phala-vat bhogatva-
prasāṅgaḥ,³⁴ bhogini ca
śaktipātābhyupagatau atiprasāṅgaḥ*

[The consideration of various views:] If it (viz. the arising of knowledge) is produced by action [*karma*], like the ordinary result of an action, then we have the unacceptable conclusion of (*śaktipāto* remaining within) the domain of ordinary experience [as opposed to an act of God]. And further, we would have the entirely unwarranted conclusion of accepting that *śaktipāto* is applicable to an ordinary experiencer [a *bhogin*, caught up in the world of sense-experience].

*īśvarecchā-nimittatve tu jñānodayasya
anyonyāśrayatā vaiyarthyaṁ ca, īśvare
rāgādi-prasāṅgaḥ*

On the other hand, if the cause (of the arising of spiritual knowledge) is the will of the Lord, then the arising of

³⁴ *bhogatvaprasaṅgaḥ*; em. Vasudeva: -*prasāṅge* ed.

knowledge is purposeless [because the Lord could just will *shaktipata* directly] and logically mutually dependent. [That is, the arising of knowledge is dependent on the will of the Lord, and the will of the Lord, in the form of *shaktipata*, is dependent on the arising of knowledge – a circular argument.] Further, partiality on the part of the Lord is an undesired consequence (of this view).

*viruddhayoḥ karmaṇoḥ sama-balayoh
anyonya-pratibandhe karma-sāmyam tataḥ
śaktipāta iti cet, na – kramikatve
virodhāyogāt, virodhe'pi anyasya
aviruddhasya karmaṇo bhoga-dāna-
prasaṅgāt, aviruddha- karmāpravṛttau
tadaiva deha- pāta-prasaṅgāt*

"Equality of *karmas*" is the theory that two opposing *karmas* of equal strength are blocking one another, therefore *shaktipata* occurs. If this (theory is proposed), we deny it. If *karmas* are successive, (then it is untenable) due to the impossibility of their opposition. Even if such a "karmic blockage" were possible, (it could not be the cause of *shaktipata*) because of the logical problem that another, unopposed *karma* could (equally well) grant (the re-commencement of) experience. In the absence of an unopposed *karma* to re-initiate (experience), *then* (your theory is unworkable) due to the unacceptable consequence of the falling away of the body [i.e., death, because experience is no longer possible].

*jātyāyus-pradam karma na pratibadhyate
bhoga-pradam eva tu pratibadhyate iti cet,
kutaḥ – tat-karma-sadbhāve yadi śaktiḥ
patet tarhi sā bhoga-pradāt kim bibhiyāt |*

"Karma as the bestower of type of birth and life-span cannot be blocked (in this way), but only as the bestower of

experience can it be blocked" – if this is argued, we say "why?" If Power can descend in spite of the existence of those (types of) *karma*, then why would She be worried about bestowing experience?

That is, if Shakti can descend in spite of the governing influence of *jati*- and *ayush-karma*, why could she not descend in spite of *bhoga-karma*? And furthermore, why should she be interested in helping to re-activate worldly experience? In the corresponding passage in *Tantraloka*, Abhinava clarifies this by adding, "When Shiva manifests within a particular individual soul in his true form, he does not thereby depend on impurity (*mala*) or *karma*. How could they, which are part of the nature of the individual soul alone, become causes with regard to him? Thus he brings it about totally independently of *maya* (and its correlates)" (13.115-6ab).

*atha mala-paripāke śaktipātaḥ so'pi kim-
svariūpaḥ? kim ca tasya nimittam? iti,
etena vairāgyam dharma-viśeṣo vivekaḥ sat-
sevā sat-prāptiḥ deva-pūjā ity ādi- betuḥ
pratyukta iti bheda-vādinām sarvam
asamañjasam |*

Now (we will address the theory of) *shaktipata* occurring when there is a "ripening of impurity." What is the nature (of that ripening)? And what is its cause? In answer to this, (it is said to occur) through (one or more of) these: renunciation; special religious practices; discrimination; devoted service to holy people; attaining (the company) of holy people; worship of God; and so on. These are (variously) answered as being the cause – all this is the nonsensical prattle of the dualists.

Here Abhinava gives an amusing dismissal to this theory, but in *Tantraloka* he argues against it much more carefully: "But surely, [an objector might say,] those who attain the state of mantra-beings and so on, do so through worship (*puja*), mantra repetition (*japa*), meditation, zealous service of God (*shankara-sevana*), and so on. How then can their attainment be independent of actions?' Not so, (we say). Let us begin first by investigating *why* they (engage) in mantra repetition, meditation on transcendent Shiva, and things of that nature. (All the arguments for) the (theory of the) equality of *karmas*, growing disgusted with the world (*vairagya*), the ripening of impurity, and so on (as causes) have been found faulty. If you say the cause is the Lord's will, then the one and only (form of that) cause is the Descent of Power" (13.259cd-262ab). Thus Abhinava makes the interesting argument that rather than "good works" drawing God's grace, it is only through grace in the form of *shaktipata* that one can have any real capacity for, or sustained interest in, such spiritual practices. This accords with his idea that *shaktipata*, taking place as it does when the Lord decides to reveal his divine nature through the vehicle of an apparent individual, marks the beginning of the committed spiritual path, not some point of merit reached along it. Further, all activities on that path are an expression of divine power, and thus are not part of the karmic set-up, as their purpose is, according to him, to effect a temporary (and eventually permanent) identification with one's true nature, and not to produce change

within the matrix of ordinary reality as actions are generally intended to do. He comments, "Thus mantra repetition and so on are (the Lord's) Power of Action (*kriya-shakti*), not *karma*. For 'karma' in general usage is that which grants lower forms of experience and obscures the true nature of the experiencer" (TA 13.262-3c). All the Lord's Powers, by their very nature of total freedom, operate outside the normal boundaries of the circumscribed realm of differentiated reality. Further, as in all coherent non-dual philosophies, Abhinava argues that the state of liberation is accessed through an epistemological shift, not an ontological one. Thus, for him, even ritual is a form of mystical knowing, and can have no other valid purpose but the revelation of the eternally and singularly existent trans-individual Consciousness that has ever been both subject and objects of one's experience.

Now that he has refuted the opponent's views, he goes on to state that of his own tradition.

*svatantra-paramesādvaya-vāde tu
upapadyate etat, yathāhi — paramesvarah
svarūpācchādāna-kṛīḍayā paśuḥ pudgalo
'nuḥ sampannaḥ, na ca tasya deśa-kāla-
svarūpa-bheda-virodhaḥ tad-vat
svarūpa-sthagana-vinivṛtṭyā svarūpa-
pratyaṭpattiṃ jhātiti vā krameṇa vā
samāśrayan śaktipāta-pātram aṇuḥ ucyate,
svātantrya-mātra-sāras ca asau
parama-śivaḥ śakteḥ pātayitā*

By contrast, in our tradition that teaches the non-duality of the independent Supreme Lord, it occurs in this way. The Supreme Lord, as a play of hiding his true nature, becomes a bound soul, an individual, an individuated entity, and yet there is no contradiction to his true

nature (in manifesting) within the (circumscribed) divisions of space, time, and particularity. In the same way [i.e., as an independent play], when bringing to an end the concealment of his true nature, and experiencing a return to that true nature instantly or gradually, He is called an individual soul that is a fit vessel for *shaktipata*. And he is Supreme Shiva [throughout this process], whose essence is simply his (total) autonomy: the one who causes Power to descend.

In this beautifully written passage, Abhinava argues that "the Supreme Lord" and "the contracted individual soul" are just different names for one Consciousness in two different states or phases. Thus, though *shaktipata* remains here an act of grace, it is in fact an act of gracing oneself. This is stated in the last phrase, which hinges on the fact that the Sanskrit word *shaktipaata* is grammatically causative (through *vridhhi* derivation from *-pata*) and thus suggests an agent. In non-dual ontology, there is of course only one agent, whether in an expanded or contracted phase.

iti nirapekṣa eva śaktipāto yaḥ svarūpa-prathā-phalaḥ, yaś tu bhogotsukasya sa karmāpekṣaḥ, lokottara-rūpa-bhogotsukasya tu sa eva śaktipātaḥ paramēśvarecchā-prerita-māyā-garbhādhikārīya-rudra-viṣṇu-brahmādi-dvareṇa mantrādi-rūpatvaṁ māyā-puṁ-vivekaṁ puṁs-kalā-vivekaṁ puṁ-prakṛti-vivekaṁ puṁ-buddhi-vivekaṁ anyac ca phalaṁ prasnuvānaḥ tad-adhara-tattva- bhogaṁ pratibadhnāti
Thus the Descent of Power is entirely independent, and results in the manifestation of one's true nature. But for one who desires worldly experience, its results depend on action [*karma*].

Now, that *shaktipata* received by one desiring enjoyment in a supernatural form (in another world) takes place through (the agency of other divine powers): Rudra, Vishnu, Brahma, and so on, beings who hold office within the realm of differentiated reality [*maya*], directed by the will of the Supreme Lord. (Such a "lower grade" *shaktipata*), granting (various) other fruits – e.g., discrimination between the soul [*puruṣa*] and the faculty of discernment [*buddhi*], between the soul and materiality [*prakṛti*], between the soul and the limited power of action [*kala*], between *maya* and the soul, (culminating in) existence in the form of a Mantra-being and (as a Lord of Mantras or Great Lord of Mantras) – binds one to experience in a Level of Reality [*tattva*] below Shiva.

Here Abhinavagupta enumerates the levels of attainment reached by those who want to enjoy existence as a super-powerful entity in a higher dimension of reality. He alludes to the attainment that is the pinnacle for the Sankhya system, *kaivalya* or "isolation," then to the higher states of being called *Pralayakala* and *Vijnanakala*. The former are those free of *karma*, existing in dimensions (*bhuvanas*) above the *kala-tattva*, but still within *maya*. The latter are free of both *karma* and *maya*, and exist just below the Pure Universe, where everything that exists does so as a phase of Shiva's divine awareness. Mantras are (in their true form) conscious entities that exist in the Pure Universe on the level of Pure Knowledge (*śuddha-vidya*), while Mantreshvaras and Mantra-maheshvaras are higher phases that exist respectively on the Ishvara and Sadashiva levels of

the Pure Universe. The latter then are the highest phase of reality other than Shiva/Shakti. Abhinava stresses here that all these levels of divine enjoyment stop short of that ultimate transcendent reality, suggesting to the reader that the latter is the only worthwhile goal.³⁵

bhoga-mokṣobhayotsukasya bhoge karmāpekṣo mokṣe tu tan-nirapekṣaḥ, iti sāpekṣa- nirapekṣaḥ |

(The *śaktipāta* which takes place) for one desiring both enjoyment and liberation is dependent on action with reference to the enjoyment (part), but with reference to liberation, it is independent of action. Thus it (*śaktipāta*) is both dependent and independent.

Abhinava adds in the *Tantraloka*: "The Descent of Power and devotion to God of those who do not desire fruits (of worldly enjoyment) are independent of family, caste, body, actions, age, religious practices, and wealth, while the devotion of those who do desire fruits depends on actions and so on. Therefore there is a variation in the kinds of fruits attained, but it is not so regarding liberation" (13.117c-119b).

na ca vācyaṃ – kasmāt kasmimīcid eva puṃsi śaktipāta iti sa eva paramēśvaraḥ tathā bhāti iti satattve ko'sau puṃnā nāma yad-uddeśena viśaya-kṛtā codanā iyam |

Why *śaktipāta* occurs to some particular person (and not another) need not be discussed. He (the individual who receives it or does not) himself is the Supreme Lord (who) appears like that [in the form of one who is a vessel for *śaktipāta* and one who is not].

When this is the reality, who indeed is that person with reference to whom this objection is made an issue?

The Nine Types of *Śaktipāta*

sa cāyaṃ śaktipāto navadhā – tīvra-madhya-mandasya utkarṣa-mādhyasthya-nikarṣaiḥ punas traividhyāt, tatra utkṛṣṭa-tīvrāt tadaiva deha-pāte paramēśatā

Now this *śaktipāta* is of nine types, because the three types of "intense," "medium," and "gentle" are again (multiplied) by (the three variants of) "accelerated," "middling," and "reduced."

[1.] First, "accelerated intense" (*śaktipāta*) immediately causes the falling away of the body, (and the attainment of) the state of the Supreme Lord.

madhya-tīvrāt śāstrācāryānapekṣiṇaḥ sva-pratyayasya prātibha-jñānodayaḥ yad-udaye bāhya-saṃskāraṃ vinaiva bhogāpavarga-pradaḥ prātibho gurur ity ucyate

[2.] "Middling intense" (*śaktipāta*) causes a spontaneous arising of intuitive knowledge in one whose conviction is thus based (only) on himself, without any need for scriptures or teachers. When this intuitive knowledge arises, he is said to be – without any external qualification rite – a "Self-revealed Guru," a giver of both enjoyment and liberation.

The second variety of the Descent either results in living liberation (*jīvanmuktī*) or a state very close to it, for the

³⁵ For more information on these categories, see Vasudeva; cf. also TA 13.271cd-76ab and 9.184-189.

unfailing divine insight (*pratibha*) guides the recipient from within. He or she needs no evidence (*pratyaya*) for this attainment other than the inner experience it engenders. Such a person clearly would need no formal ritual of initiation, because he already possesses what that would bestow. In TA, Abhinava comments, "For one on the path of divine intuition, there is no (necessity) for the procedure of the several initiations, no (formal) consecration (as a guru), no succession to a lineage, and no (ritual) vow of mantras, since he is directed (*adbishthita*) by the primal sage, the great God. It is for the attainment of such inner power that all the rites are offered; but it is (already) his own nature" (I3.140-1). All the practices referred to here are consecrating rituals generally thought necessary to qualify one to perform certain practices or hold office as a guru. The most obscure among them, the vow of mantras (*vidya-vrata*) is described in the tenth chapter of the *Siddha-yogeshvari-mata* as an ancillary ritual that qualifies one for an elaborate mantra practice, and involves five days of observing silence, doing *japa*, and wearing a white garment with limbs smeared with ashes (see Törzsök).

The idea of an authoritative Guru not formally consecrated must have been controversial, and certainly would not have been admitted by many groups. In Indian religious culture generally, rites (*samskara*) were considered necessary to grant the qualification (*adhikara*) to teach or undertake esoteric practices. Therefore Abhinava argues that this type of recipient of the Descent is in fact initiated, through the goddesses that

embody the potencies of his own consciousness rather than through an external intermediary (see below). This esotericising exegesis does more than validate such a person; it elevates him beyond the level of those who require formal initiation. (TA 4.78-79 and *Nishisanchara* 4.41 also mention this category of master.) Such persons are reputedly attested also in contemporary Indian religion, where if they attain their exalted state at a young age, they are often referred to as *avatars* or *janma-siddhas*.

*tasya hi na samayyādi-kalpanā kācit,
atrāpi tāratamya-sadbhāvaḥ – icchā-
vaicitryāt iti, saty api prātibhatve
śāstrādy-apekṣā samvādāya syād api, iti
nirbhitti-sabbhittī-ādi-bahu-bhedatvam
ācāryasya prātibhasyāgameṣu uktam,
sarvathā pratibhāṁśo bālīyān – tat-
sannidhau anyeṣām anadbhikārāt |
bheda-darśana iva anādi-śiva-sannidhau
mukta-śivānām sṛṣṭi-layādi- kṛtyeṣu*

Nor does he need any rites whatsoever, such as the basic form of initiation or (higher initiations). Even here, though, there are relative gradations, due to variations in the Will (of the Lord). Though spontaneous intuition is present, there may also be (a necessity for) dependence on scripture and teachers for the sake of corroborating it. Many divisions, such as "without support" and "with support" are described in the scriptures with regard to the Self-revealed master. (Even) a portion of true intuitive insight is stronger in all cases, because, in its presence, no other form of knowledge has authority; just as in dualist philosophy, the "Shivas by liberation"

have no authority in the acts of creation, dissolution, and so on, in the presence of the eternal Shiva.

Abhinava writes in *Tantraloka*, "Therefore such a devotee to the teachings of Shiva is initiated (directly) by the Goddesses. Depending on the steadiness or shakiness (of his intuition) he too should perform self-refinement (*sva-samskara*), through austerity, mantra repetition, and so on, in accordance with sacred observance (*vrata*), either by himself or directed by a Guru" (13.142-3ab).

*manda-tīvrāt śaktipātāt sad-guru-viṣayā
yiyāsā bhavati, asad-guru-viṣayāyām tu
tirobbhāva eva, asad-gurutas tu
sad-guru-gamanam śaktipātād eva |*

[3.] From a "reduced intense" Descent of Power, there arises the desire to approach a true Guru. (The desire to approach) a false guru, on the other hand, is nothing but the Lord's power of Obscuration. Leaving a false guru and going to a true Guru occurs only because of *śaktipāta*.

*sad-gurus tu samastaitac-chāstra-tattva-
jñāna-pūrṇaḥ sāksāt
bhagavad-bhairava-bhaṭṭāraka eva,
yogino'pi svabhyasta-jñānatayaiva
mocakatvam tatra yogitvasya³⁶ saubhāgya-
lāvaṇyādi-mattvasyevānupayogāt |
asad-gurus tu anyāḥ sarva eva |*

A true Guru, perfectly full of the knowledge of the Truth in all these scriptures, is none other than the revered Lord Bhairava incarnate. Even a Yogin liberates others only by means of his well-practised knowledge; with regard to that capacity of liberating others, his

status as a yogin (per se), like his other intrinsic qualities, such as fortune, good looks, and so on, is useless. But all others (who do not have such liberating knowledge) are false gurus (despite any attractive qualities they may possess).

He adds succinctly in *Tantraloka*, "One thing alone marks one a Guru: wisdom that is expertly put into practice" (13.333ab). And "The variation in capacity for (true) knowledge (seen in various gurus) is due solely to the strength of their *śaktipāta*" (13.326cd).

*evam yiyāsuh guroḥ jñāna-lakṣaṇām dīkṣām
prāpnoti yayā sadya eva mukto bhavati,
jīvaṇn api atra avalokanāt kathanāt
śāstra-sambodhanāt caryā-darśanāt
caru-dānāt ity ādayo bhedāḥ |*

Thus one who desires to approach (such a true master) obtains the initiation characterised by knowledge from the Guru, by which he is liberated quite quickly, even while living (in the body). In this matter, the different ways (the disciple may receive this initiation are): through a look (from the Guru); through (his) discourse; through explaining scripture; through showing his practices; through giving the oblation; and so on.

In the first sentence above, Abhinava may be thinking of the definition of initiation given in the *Nishvasa-naya*, "Initiation through the descent of Shiva's Power bestows knowledge" (f.31v2: *śiva-śakti-nipātena dīkṣhā jñānam prayacchati*). Here and in the corresponding *Tantraloka* passage, he argues for the validity of non-ritual forms of initiation that happen spontaneously through the agency of a

³⁶ Corij. Sanderson restores sense to the passage: *mocakatve tatra yogyatvasya* ed.

charismatic Guru who has realised his or her oneness with Shiva. From the context, we know that this higher form of initiation applies to those who have experienced a *shaktipata* of the third (intense) degree.

We receive more detail from this interesting passage in the TA: "What is the Truth? Who knows that Truth?' Due to having these thoughts, through intuition or the company of (spiritually-inclined) friends, one conceives a desire to approach a Guru. Thus, because he possesses that desire, he finds a master. And (the master), by the specific gradation (of *shaktipata* with which he himself is) endowed, is (either) self-perfected or liberated through spiritual practice [lit. 'refined']" (13.222cd-224ab). "These are the varieties of initiation: from (the Guru's) discourse; from being in company (with him); from a compassionate glance; from a scripture; through a transference (of *shakti*); from him showing the basic religious practice; from the (transgressive) oblation; from the mystic power of mantra or sacred hand gesture (*mudra*); by one of these or all of them" (13.227cd-28).

abhyāsavato vā tadānīm sadya eva prāṇa-vijojikām dīkṣām labhate, sā tu maraṇa-kṣaṇa eva kāryā iti vakṣyāma, iti tīvraś traidhā

Or (one who has received "reduced-intense" *shaktipata*) may obtain an initiation, from one practiced in it, of "deprivation of the vital force" that occurs immediately. However, that initiation may be done only at the moment of death. We will discuss this later. This ends the (discussion of the) three kinds of intense (*shaktipata*).

The category of *sadyo-nirvana-dikṣa*, which ejects the soul from the body and grants instant liberation, is also taught in the Shaiva Siddhanta. Saiddhantika commentator Narayanakantha writes (ad *Mrigendra-tantra*, *Kriya-pada*, 8.145ab):

yā tu sadyaḥ tat-kṣaṇenaiva nirvāṇa-dā mukti-betuḥ tad-dīkṣārtham siddha-mantra guruḥ śiṣya-yogyatām tīvra-śakti-pātāghrātatva-lakṣaṇām vīkṣya tām dīkṣām kuryāt

Seeing the fitness of the disciple for his initiation, marked by the fact of his having been touched by an intense Descent of Power, the guru, whose (expertise in) mantra is perfect, should perform the initiation which is the cause of liberation, which grants *nirvana* immediately, at that very moment.

As this topic really belongs under the topic of Initiation, Abhinava takes it up there (Chapter 15 of the *Tantrasara*). Now he turns to the medium grades of *shaktipata*, which result in liberation at death (the norm for Shaiva Siddhanta) or in one's next incarnation in a paradisaal realm.

utkṛṣṭa-madhyāt śaktipātāt kṛta-dīkṣāko'pi svātmanah śivatāyām na tathā drydha-pratipattiḥ bhavati, pratipatti-paripāka-krameṇa tu debānte śiva eva |

[4.] When one receives an "accelerated medium" Descent of Power, though he takes initiation, his perception of the divinity of his Self is not firm to the same degree (as those who receive intense *shaktipatas*). However, through the gradual ripening of his perception, he certainly becomes Shiva when the end of the body comes.

*madhya-madhyāt tu śivatotsuko'pi bhoga-
prepsuḥ bhavati, iti tathaiva dīkṣāyām
jñāna-bhājanam, sa ca yogābhyāsa-
labdham anenaiva dehena bhogaṁ bhuktvā
dehānte śiva eva*

[5.] Now, one who receives "middling medium" (*śaktipata*), though possessing a desire for divinity, (still) has a desire for enjoyment. Thus he is worthy of (being granted) knowledge, in his initiation, of that very kind [i.e., that leads to enjoyment then liberation]. Having experienced enjoyment obtained through the practice of yoga, in this very body, he certainly becomes Shiva when the end of the body comes.

*nikṣṭa-madhyāt tu dehāntareṇa bhogaṁ
bhuktvā śivatvam eti, iti madhyas tu tridhā*

[6.] From "reduced medium" (*śaktipata*), having experienced enjoyment in another body, he becomes divine (in that next life). Such are the three varieties of medium (*śaktipata*).

Clearly, Abhinava is much less interested in discussing the paths of those who desire enjoyments (*bhoga*) and powers (*siddhi*). He repeatedly privileges the longing for liberation (*mumuksha*) over the desire for enjoyment, though his scriptural texts make no such judgement, regarding *siddhi* as a perfectly acceptable goal. Abhinava argues in the *Tantraloka* that it is only when a yogin becomes indifferent to the exercise of power over others that he is finally liberated and can then liberate others. (13.185cd)

*bbogotsukatā yadā pradhāna-bhūtā tadā
mandatvam – pārameśvara-mantra-
yogopāyatayā yatas tatra autsukyam,
pārameśa-mantra-yogādeś ca yato mokṣa-
paryantatvam atah śaktipāta-rūpatā |*

*tatrāpi tāratamyāt trai-vidhyam, ity eṣa
mukhyaḥ śaktipātaḥ |*

When desire for enjoyment is predominant, then (*śaktipata*) is "gentle." Because the desire for it is (fulfilled) by means of the mantras and yoga of the Supreme Lord, and because the mantras, yoga, and (other practices) of the Supreme Lord (necessarily) eventually culminate in liberation, thus it (still) has the nature of a *śaktipata*. Regarding that (type of *śaktipata* also), because it has gradations, there are three varieties. Thus the Descent of Power is most important (even for one desiring enjoyments).

*vaiṣṇavādīnām tu rājānugrahavat na
mokṣāntatā iti na iha vivecanam |
śivaśaktyadhiṣṭhānam tu sarvatra iti
uktam, sā param jyeṣṭhā na bhavati api tu
ghorā ghorātayā vā*

The ("śaktipata") of the Vaishnavas and others, on the other hand, is like the favour of a king, and does not result in liberation. Thus it has not been considered here. However, the influence of the Power of Shiva is universal, as has been said (in the scriptures); but she does not become the Eldress (*Jyeshtha*) (for the Vaishnavas and others), on the contrary (she is for them only either) Ghora or Ghoratara.

Here Abhinava refers to the aspects of *Shakti* that operate to grant different types of beings the destiny they knowingly or unknowingly pursue. *Jyeshtha*, the Eldress, also known as *Aghora*, "the Not-terrible Goddess," is the aspect of *Shakti* who continuously uplifts those on the path of enlightenment. *Ghora*, "the Terrible Goddess," also known as *Raudri*, is that Power who keeps those who desire enjoyment on the

wheel of transmigration, content with the higher pleasures of existence on Earth or in the higher planes of the impure universe. Ghoratara, "the Most Terrible Goddess," also known as Vama (because she "vomits forth" *samsara*), is she who drags those who are addicted to the lower pleasures into lower and lower hells (see TA 6.52-57).

sa eṣa śakti-pāto vicitro'pi tāratamya-vaicitryāt bhidyate, kaścit vaiṣṇavādi-stbaḥ samayyādi-krameṇa srotaḥ-pañcake ca prāpta-paripākaḥ sarvottīrṇa-bhagavat-ṣaḍ-ardha-śāstra-paramādhikāritām eti
This *śaktipata*, though varied (in its nature) is (further) divided in accordance with the variety of grades (of aspirants). Someone established in (traditions) such as the Vaishnavas, (who enters our path) through the basic initiation and what follows, and becomes (spiritually) ripe in the five streams (of our scriptures), then becomes supremely qualified through (the study of) the scriptures of the Trika, (authored) by the Blessed Lord and (having the power of) rescuing all.
anyas tu ullaṅghana-krameṇa ananta-bhedena, ko'pi akramam iti ata eva adharādhara-śāsana-sthā guravo'pi iba maṇḍala- mātra-darśane'pi anadhikāriṇaḥ
Another (aspirant may attain this status) by passing over (some of the usual stages) in (any one of) countless ways. Some extraordinary person (may attain the highest immediately,) without any stages. For that very reason, those established in one or another of the lower teachings, even if they are gurus, are not qualified even to see our *maṇḍala*.

To see the *maṇḍala* refers to the basic initiation ceremony, where the initiand is shown the secret initiation *maṇḍala* at

the appropriate time (for the Trika, this is the *trishulabja-maṇḍala* or *maṇḍala* of Shiva's trident surmounted by four symbolic lotuses). Abhinava seems to be saying here that each person who comes to the Trika passes through their own unique set of stages of development, under the influence of Shiva's Power, and therefore it is not appropriate to give even the basic initiation to those of other traditions who are simply curious but not yet ready to leave behind their former practice and move on to the next stage. Speaking in the *Tantraloka* of this kind of person who slowly realises the value of higher and yet higher philosophies, he writes, "A gradual Descent of Power (is one where) a person in the Siddhanta school then enters the Vama school, (then) the Dakshina, the Mata, Kula, and Kaula, then (reaches) the Trika, the Heart (of Shaivism). Or, by skipping over, (one may reach the Trika) without following (all the steps in) this order or even immediately" (13.300cd-301). Here the "Vama" refers to the Vamashaiva cult of Tumburu and his four sisters taught in the *Vinashikha* and other Vamatantras. Thus Dakshina refers to the Dakshinashaiva cult of Svachhandabhairava taught primarily in the Svachchandatantra. It may be the case that the Mata refers to the Picumata and the Yamala cult of Kapalisha associated with it and closely related to the Krama. Kula, then, stands for the interrelated Kalikula cults such as that of the Krama, centred on Kali Kalasankarshini, taught in the Jayadrathayamala and other texts. Finally, Kaula refers to the later aestheticised stage of those cults which was so influential on the Trika. Abhinavagupta here provides a useful

classification of the dominant sects of his time (omitting only that of Amritheshvara taught in the Netratanttra), arranged in a hierarchy marked by increasing access to the esoteric formulations that grant liberation more rapidly as well as greater enjoyments prior to it. The fact that some of the traditions arranged lower in the hierarchy may have teachings more or less incompatible with the Trika does not pose a problem, as an accomplished master may reconcile the differences through exegetical strategies that purport to bring out what is already implicit within those texts, authored as they were by Shiva, though intended for those of lesser aptitudes.

*ūrdhva-sāsana-sthas tu guruḥ
adharādhara-sāsanaṁ pratyuta prāṇayati –
pūrṇatvāt iti sarvādhikārī | sa ca dāśīko
guruḥ ācāryo dīkṣakaḥ cumbakaḥ, sa cāyaṁ
pūrṇa-jñāna eva sarvottamaḥ – tena vinā
dīkṣādy-asampatteḥ |*

On the other hand, a guru who is established in the higher teachings breathes life into the lower teachings, due to his perfection. Thus he is qualified with respect to all (the scriptures). He is (called) a guide, a guru, a master, an initiator, a “kisser,” and he is the best of all, as his knowledge is entirely perfect and complete: without it, he could not perform initiations and so on.

A “kisser” (*chumbaka*) is simply a less common name for a guru, perhaps one that emphasises oral transmission of knowledge. It seems the designation was in origin a Kaula one. (See *Kula-sara* 15 and *Svacchanda-tantra* 5.46 and commentary.)

*yogī tu phalotsukasya yukto yadi
upāyopadeśena avyavahitam eva phalaṁ
dātum śaktaḥ, upāyopadeśena tu jñāne eva
yukto mokṣeḥ pi abhyupāyāt jñāna-pūrṇatā-
kāṅkṣī ca bahūn api gurūn kuryāt |*

Now, a yogin is appropriate (as a teacher) for one desiring (worldly or supernatural) fruits only if (the former) is capable, by teaching the (correct) means, to grant the fruits (of yogic practice) immediately. But he is appropriate with regard to that (specific kind of) knowledge alone, by teaching those means. One who desires (to attain) perfection in his knowledge with regard to liberation as well, through (the appropriate) means, may approach many teachers.

Here a yogin refers to one who has mastered supernatural attainments (*siddhi*) as opposed to a *jnanin*, one who teaches the path of liberating knowledge. Abhinava seems to be rhetorically saying that a yogin is *not* appropriate as a teacher, because he can only teach the means, not grant the fruit. This becomes apparent when considering this passage in the light of *Tantraloka* 13.340: “In contrast to a yogin, who cannot grant the fruits of practice but only teach the means (to attain them), the superior Guru of knowledge is one who can point out the means and further can liberate one.” Regarding the assertion of the validity of approaching many teachers for knowledge, we know that Abhinava himself did this (“like a bee wandering from flower to flower in search of fragrance” [TA 13.335]) and learned much from a variety of gurus, yet he also revered his Guru Shambhunatha, presumably his last, above all others as

the one whose knowledge was perfect and complete.

uttamottamādi-jñānabhedāpekṣayā teṣu tu vartate, sampūrṇa-jñāna-guru-tyāge tu prāyaścittam eva | nanu so'pi abruvan viparītāṃ vā bruvan kiṃ na tyājyaḥ, naiva iti brūmaḥ, tasya hi pūrṇa-jñānatvāt eva rāgādy-abbhāva iti avacanādikaṃ śiṣya-gatenaiva kenacit ayogyatvānāśvastatvādīnā nimittena syāt iti, tad-upāsane yatanīyaṃ śiṣyeṇa, na tat-tyāge

He may attend on them, with the hope (of attaining) various kinds of higher and higher knowledge. But when one leaves a guru of perfect and complete knowledge, (it is a transgression, for which) a penance is definitely (required). [Objection:] "Surely, should not even such a guru be abandoned if he does not speak or speaks contradictions?" Not at all, we say. For precisely because of his perfect knowledge, he lacks attachment and aversion. His not speaking or (speaking contradictions) may be due to some cause in the *disciple*, such as unfitness (for knowledge), untrustworthiness or unreliability, and so on. The disciple ought to make an effort in his service, not in his abandonment. [See *Svacchanda-tantra* 1.12c-17b for the characteristics of true and false gurus.]

*evam anugraha-nimittam śaktipāto nirapekṣa eva — karmādi-niyaty-anapekṣaṇāt*³⁷

Thus *śaktipata* is caused by grace, and entirely independent, because it does not depend on binding fate, *karma* and so on.

The five independent acts of God

(*pancha-kṛitya*) in Shaivism are creation (*srishṭi*), maintenance (*sthiti*), dissolution (*sambhava*), obscuration (*tirobhava*), and grace (*anugraha*). All five are performed in microcosm by each individual instantiation of the Lord. The last two are complementary opposites, thus Abhinava briefly treats obscuration here, as it is the inverse of the act of grace that manifests as *śaktipata*. Obscuration is the power in operation within one who turns away from the spiritual path, whether through apostasy or through continuing to practice outwardly but despising it within. Even such a person eventually attains liberation, after a period of self-created suffering, as Shiva's grace cannot go to waste.

tirobhāva iti, tirobhāvo hi karmādy-anapekṣa-gāḍha-duḥkha-moha-bhāgitva-phalaḥ,³⁸ *yathāhi prakāśa-svātantryāt prabuddho'pi mūḍhavad ceṣṭate bṛdayena ca mūḍha-ceṣṭāṃ nindati, tathā mūḍho'pi prabuddha-ceṣṭāṃ mantrārādhanaādikāṃ kuryāt, nindec ca |*

(Now to address) the topic of "obscuration." For obscuration (is a power of the Lord that) has as its fruit a share in delusion and intense misery; it is not based on *karma* and (binding fate, [but rather, from the highest perspective, it is the free exercise of one's capacity for contraction]). Just as a person, though an Awakened being, may behave like a fool out of the freedom of the light (of consciousness), yet scorn the foolish behaviour in his heart, similarly another person, though a fool, may behave like an awakened one, propitiating his mantra-deity and so on,

³⁷ Following the alternate reading given in the edition, *niyatyanapekṣaṇāt* for *niyatyapekṣaṇāt*.

³⁸ Following the alternate reading given in the edition, *karmādyanapekṣa* for *karmādyapekṣa*.

and (yet) he may scorn (such behaviour in his heart).

*yathā ca asya mūḍha-ceṣṭā kriyamāṇāpi
prabuddhasya dhvamsam eti tathā asya
prabuddha-ceṣṭā, sā tu nindyamānā –
niṣiddhācaraṇa-rūpatvāt svayaṁ ca tayaiva
viśaṅkamānatvāt enaṁ duḥkha-moha-paṅke
nimajjayati*

And just as, though he practises the behaviour of a fool, (such action) is destroyed for an awakened one [i.e., it generates no karmic result], similarly the behaviour of an awakened one (bears no fruit for a fool). Despising this (enlightened practice), because it has the form of prohibited [i.e. non-Vedic] action, and because he himself doubts it and feels inhibited regarding it, it drags him down into the mud of misery and delusion.

These doubts and inhibitions (*śaṅka*) may arise, especially for a brahmin, because of brahminical criticisms of the Shaiva path as non-Vedic and its ritual as transgressing Vedic norms (and because that individual's weak level of *śaktipata* does not give him sufficient faith to ignore such criticisms). Even the claim that initiation bestows liberation goes strongly against the traditional Vedic grain as represented by bastions of orthodoxy such as Kumarila.

*na tu utpanna-śaktipātasya tirobhāvo'sti,
atrāpi ca karmādy-apekṣā pūrvavat
niṣedhyā, tatrāpi ca icchā-vaicitryāt etad-
deba- mātropabhogya-duḥkha-phalatvaṁ vā
dīkṣā-samaya-caryā-guru-devāgny-ādau
sevā-nindanobhaya-prasaktānāṁ iva prāk
śiva-śāsana-sthānāṁ tat-tyāgināṁ iva*

But (this power of) obscuration does not exist for one in whom the Descent of Power has occurred. In this case as well,

dependence on *karma* and (binding fate) is disallowed as before. And even in the case (of those referred to above, initiated but inhibited), due to the variations in the will (of the Lord), the fruition of suffering is to be experienced only in this body; as in the case of those who are simultaneously inclined to reverence and criticism regarding (the central tenets of Shaivism, such as) initiation, the basic prescribed discipline [*samaya-charya*], the guru, the deity, the (sacred) fire, and so on. And similarly for those who were previously established in the teaching of Shiva and then renounced it.

The doctrine that such obscuration is temporary and the soul will eventually attain liberation is expounded also by Shaiva Siddhanta authority Bhatta Ramakantha, in his commentary on *Kirana-tantra* 5.26-29. He argues that even one who has fallen from and rejected the path to such an extent that he is born as a flesh-eating demon in a hell realm, after a period of time (the *Pauskara* suggests it is a hundred years), the subtle trace (*vasana*) of his initiation will bear fruit and he will return to the spiritual path and attain liberation. Thus he defends the doctrine that *śaktipata* is always a successful act of grace, and the initiation that follows always liberates, with which Abhinava also agreed. However, Abhinava suggests that the soul returns to the spiritual path as a result of another *śaktipata*, triggered through a ceremony performed by the guru even after his death.

*tatrāpi icchā-vaicitryāt tirobbūto'pi svayaṁ
vā śaktipātena yujyate, mrto vā
bandhu-gurvādi-kṛpā-mukhena ity*

Even in that case, due (once again) to the variations in the will (of the Lord), though a person has become "obscured," he is endowed with the Descent of Power either by himself, or if he is dead, through the compassion of a guru or a relative (of the deceased who importunes a guru on their behalf).

*evam pañca-kṛtya-bhāgitvaṃ svātmani
anusandadhat paramēśvara eva iti na
khaṇḍitam ātmānam paśyet*

Thus, considering in himself his participation in the five divine acts [of creation, maintenance, dissolution, obscuration, and grace], he is nothing other than the Supreme Lord. Thus let him not see himself as broken [i.e. limited and separate from God].

*yathā nirargala-svātma-svātantryāt
paramēśvaraḥ |
ācchādayen nijam dhāma tathā
vivṛṇuyād api ||*

Just as the Supreme Lord, through the unrestrained freedom of his own Self, may conceal his glory, in the same way he may reveal it as well.

Conclusions and Modern Examples

The theory of *śaktipata* is a fascinating indigenous account of one role played by mystical experience in the structure of the Shaiva religion of mediaeval India. The attempt to valorise and integrate personal experience within the normative frameworks of religion creates tensions between the subjective phenomenology of the former and the need for standardisation in the latter. This integrative attempt on the part of Shaiva theologians such as Abhinavagupta was a heroic one, for they wished to maintain the sacred

character of an individual's personal communion with God's Power while at the same time making it a standard requirement for admission into the ranks of the religious elite, thus preserving the important distinction they saw between religion as a cultural institution and as a personal, soteriological spiritual path. This tension between the value of individualism and the importance of community is an instantiation of a larger trend in Indian religions, typified by the paradigm of the renunciate yogin versus the temple cult. It seems that in the period after Abhinava, his doctrine of the individual "initiated by the Goddesses of his own consciousness" was used to justify a larger number of householder practitioners without a guru, in addition to the usual small communities of householders gathered around particular gurus. At the same time, on the Shaiva Siddhanta side, it seems that to maintain their ground, the strict requirement for the visible evidence of *śaktipata* decreased.

However, this tactic was unsuccessful, for the Siddhanta continued to decline in Kashmir (Sanderson 1990: 709).

The doctrine of *śaktipata* has continued down to the present day. There have been a number of modern Indian exponents of it, probably the two most notable being Swami Muktananda of Ganeshpuri (1908-82) and his lineage, and Swami Vishnu Tirtha of Rishikesh (d. 1969) and his lineage. Svami Vishnu Tirtha authored a work called *Devatma Shakti* in 1948, in which his discussion of the topic demonstrates that by the twentieth century, the concepts of *śaktipata* and *diksha* had

become collapsed. Vishnu Tirtha did not initiate his disciples through any formal ritual, but solely through *shaktipata*, which he thus characterised as "*shaktipat deeksha*," where the first term is used adjectivally. He wrote, "*Shaktipat* can be affected by sight, touch, *mantra*, or simply by the will power of the master; in the last case it works at long distances as well. *Shaktipat* is in a way an injection of *Shakti*" (77). Here we see that the Kaula's texts four-fold typology of spontaneous *shaktipata* through the contact with the charismatic master has survived, in some form, for a millennium and a half.

A further factor of interest is that Vishnu Tirth takes *shaktipata* to be that which awakens the *kundalini*, the form of *prana-shakti* normally said to dwell dormant at the base of the spine, which upon awakening, rises to the crown of the head, purifying and illuminating the individual in various ways along her path. Now, *kundalini* is present as an explicit doctrine only marginally in Abhinavagupta's works. As far as I am aware, *kundalini* appears in the context of initiation only in the brief passage at TA 29.248-52, on the "cobra" style of *vedha-diksha*, which is an initiation subsequent to the primary one, only given to those who wish to pursue *bhoga*. Even there the identification of *kundalini*, which is not explicitly named, is tenuous. However, it seems significant that Vishnu Tirtha comments, "*Shaktipat Deeksha* is also known as *Vedha Deeksha*. The term *vedha* literally means piercing through, because the Guru rouses the

kundalini and makes Her pierce through the six *chakras*" (78). Further research is needed to pinpoint when the identification of *shaktipata* with the rousing of *kundalini* came about.

As for the significant question of what are the psychological, biological, or other bases for the experiences described in the texts under the rubric of *shaktipata* or *avesha* – and I think we must assume that they did and apparently still do in fact occur – I am not qualified to comment. The investigation of this topic belongs perhaps in the field of comparative religion, for in closing we must also note that these types of experiences are not limited to practitioners associated with Indian religions, but can be observed cross-culturally. Similar phenomena are seen, for example, in Pentacostal and Charismatic Christianity. The Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, a charismatic sect, has popularised the experience of the "Toronto Blessing," which they characterise as a "transferable anointing. In its most visible form it overcomes worshippers with outbreaks of laughter, weeping, groaning, shaking, falling, 'drunkenness,' and even behaviours that have been described as a 'cross between a jungle and a farmyard.' Of greater significance, however, are the changed lives."³⁹ The remarkable similarity of terminology to what we have seen surely cannot be entirely coincidental. It is perhaps significant that the TACF advocates a contemplative, sometimes trance-inducing exercise they call a "soaking

³⁹ TACF – What is the "toronto blessing"? <http://www.tacf.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=147>; see also Toronto blessing, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toronto_blessing.

prayer." There is also a key dissimilarity between the context of this Charismatic Christian group and the mediaeval Shaiva context: in the former, such spontaneous experiences nearly always take place in groups with high levels of emotional energy, whereas the initiations we have been examining are done for one, or at most a handful of people, a setting where one would imagine such experiences are rather less common.

This concludes this initial examination of the topic of *shaktipata*. From early possession rites to elaborate metaphysical doctrines, we have seen a range of interpretations of the phenomena of religious experience in

some of its more radical instantiations, and a degree of codification and institutionalisation of the same that is unusual in the study of religion. Such intertextual topical research I believe helps to illumine the complex edifice of Shaiva theology, one portion at a time. It is my hope that such work will continue, drawing more and more scholars to this important but relatively neglected field, so that in co-operation we may increase our understanding of this major tradition. When we have advanced further toward that goal, the study of Shaivism will I am sure grant fruitful insights into the religious nature of man more generally.

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From *Vimarsha* to *Vishrama*: You, I, and the Tranquil Taste of Freedom

Arindam Chakrabarti

I study that un-utterable speech, the heart of the omnipresent Supreme, resting on that poise of infinite power, within which is contained the beginning and the end of all things.

She is reality, but all unreality is also made of Her . . .

That Bhairava is knowledge personified, yet all ignorance is also replete with Him.

That Bhairava is the final conclusion to be defended, and even the opponent's objections are made of none other than He.

(Abhinavagupta, *The Final Fifty*, verses 1-3, translation and emphasis mine)

Our claim is, rather, that . . . everyone can apprehend the experience of his fellow-men just as directly (or indirectly) as he can his own.

(Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy* 256)

Thinking of the thought symbolized by the expression "I" . . . has to be understood as an act of imagining that one was being addressed, vocatively picked out.

(R. C. Gandhi, *The Availability of Religious Ideas* 36)

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Introduction

PHILOSOPHICAL ACTIVITY IS AT its contemplative best when it reflexively notices itself. This is the kind of noticing that spontaneously turns into relishing, even if it is a doubt or an anguish that is being noticed. Pushed to the limit, metaphysical doubt about the origin of the universe or the beginning of life, when noticed thus, recedes back into the question: "Who am I, asking these questions? What is it to ask a question? What makes possible my use of words to mean this interrogative thought? What gives the first push to

speech, to these words of mine, to these questioning thoughts?" (recall the first verse of the *Kena-Upanishad*). Naturally outward-looking, our eyes, ears, and minds are then made to turn deeper and deeper inwards. Even if, to begin with, the inquiring reflexive mind finds nothing but its own ignorance about its own nature and causal source, that subjective ignorance, when we stare at it, begins to shimmer with the creative freedom of alternative answers that consciousness throws up and swings between. We might call that darkness of ignorance "*tamas*," and start our cosmogony with "In the beginning was darkness (*tamas*)."¹ We can, in a person-centred *adhyatmika* way, take that *Rg-vedic* statement to be a description of the origin of the process of inquiry itself.

An excellent example of this meditative movement from cosmological to self-referential inquiry – about the nature of this very inquiry – is to be found in one of the earliest hymns of the *Rg-veda* (1.164) which, among other things, also contains the famous and mystical division of speech into four stages which later becomes the conceptual grid for the Shaiva-Tantric theory of cognition.

Who saw the first being to be born,
when the boneless one bore in her
womb this world with bones? Life
and blood might have come from
the earth, but where would self or
consciousness come from? Who
would approach the wise ones with
these queries?

With a mind yet to be cooked I
ask this, because I simply do not
know these deep matters – too deep
even for the gods...

Even after announcing with an ecstatic mystical insight that "the heaven above is my father and sustainer, this vast expansive earth is my mother," the seer Dirghatamas ("Long-Darkness") withdraws into the questioning mode:

I ask you, what is the limit of this
earth, where is the navel of this
world, what is the sperm that gave
birth to this mighty horse (the sun)
that makes the year, and where is
that supreme space of all speech?

Notice how the words of the metaphysical search for the origin and limits of the world loop back to the topic of the primal site of the words themselves.

When the search for the origin of the cosmos, thus, keeps merging back to the search for the origin of one's own cognitive and linguistic faculties, it is not surprising that one of the many harmonies or isomorphisms (*bandhus*), in terms of which the Vedic mind would make the world intelligible to itself, would be the inseparable couple (*mithuna*): speech and reality. I am alluding here to the hymn (RV 10.114.8) that asserts that speech extends just as far as *brahman* does, spanning over heaven and earth in a thousand diverse ways. If *brahman* is taken to mean "all that there is" or "that from which all beings emerge, in whom they endure and into whom they dissolve back," then we can call it the Absolute, or simply, Reality. But there is also an ancient use of the term "*brahman*" which denotes sacred Speech or the Vedic Word! The same ambiguity enriches the crucial word "*akṣhara*," which means both a letter, more

specifically in the Upanishadic idiom the letter-sound “*Om*,” as well as the unchanging ground of all existence that is *brahman*. When (in the Brihadaranyaka assembly) Yajnavalkya said, finally satisfying the unrelenting Gargi: “The sun and the moon, the heaven and the earth, instants and hours, day and night, east and all other directions, are held and sustained under the governance of this very *akshara*,” he could have meant both the immutable Spirit or the eternal Verbum. What was noticed as the co-eternity, co-pervasiveness and inseparable coupling of *vak* and *brahman*, of Word and God, reveals itself to be a basic identity between the name and the named, the word and the reality it denotes, the three-in-one syllable *Om* and what it symbolises – the common base of the three states of sentience, that is, wakefulness, dream and sleep, of the three worlds, that is, earth, middle region and heaven. In English, of course, the distinction between speaking and speaking about is sacrosanct. You can talk about the sky but cannot talk the sky. You can utter words but cannot utter their meanings or the objects they stand for, unless it is a self-referring word like the word “word.” The profound pun on “term/terminus” (*padam*) and “I speak” (*bravimi*) in Yama’s solemn reply to the persistent Nachiketas – *sarve veda yat padam amananti . . . tatte padam samgrabhena bravimi* (*Katha Upanishad* 1.2.15) – is thus untranslatable into English (without turning the *slesha* into an explicit *yamaka*, which, as a divinity, who by definition prefers indirectness, even Yama would not like!) An

unpacking of the dual meaning, “that word which the Vedas speak or that supreme state of being that the Vedas speak of, I am telling you that word or telling you about that state of being” would foil the entire rhetorical function of suggesting the identity by the single use of an ambiguous term. The whole point – the non-duality of *akshara* as an atomic phoneme and *akshara* as changeless spirit – is lost in these alternative translations.

Before we start to translate or interpret Vedic or Tantric speech, we must learn to “study” speech, and to study speech one must worship Speech. The verb for “study” (which I have italicised in my translation of the opening epigraph above) comes from the same root as the Upanishadic word “*svadhyaya*.” Abhinavagupta, in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gita* (BG), called the *Gitartha-samgraha*, reveals a secret teaching of his spiritual lineage at the point where this self-study or “*sva-adhyaya*” has been called a knowledge-sacrifice (BG 4.28), characterising “study” as a Tantric sacrificial breathing ritual, an interpretation no other commentator offers. This part of the *Gitartha-samgraha* is extremely hard to translate, and all the existing English translations falter badly here. So I shall only try to summarise rather than translate.

The learner’s own embodied self while breathing in, in tune with the uprising *prana* in the inner-audible form of “*aum*,” divides itself into the teacher and the disciple, raising a doubt with the inhalation; then, while breathing out, the teacher-self goes through the acts of clarifying, explaining, instilling,

and thereby re-unites with the disciple-self. With these teaching-oblations, the "student" of the text feeds the fire of the intellectual bliss of the self as the listening other. And again, this exhalation as it fades out, accompanied by inner speech, joins up with the uprising inhalation in the next round of inner self-questioning and self-teaching. Thus, until the student in oneself is fully content, the study-sacrifice goes on. This leads to a final repose in one's innermost consciousness, which is the source of endless questions and answers and deepening of understanding. Abhinavagupta mentions different levels of bliss as arising consequent to such "*svadhyaya-yajna*." When he says *vacam adhiye*, "I study Speech," he is implying this secret marriage of dialectic, hermeneutic, breath-related, phoneme-oriented and meditative processes. With this little exercise in examining the feel of words, we are now ready to study one passage where Abhinavagupta directly speaks to us, his future scholarly readers.

I Am Meanable as you

Who wants to speak to rocks?
Listen, please, you all! Since you
are not inert,
You are alive and mobile, so I tell
you:
Why waste your energy falling
asleep and waking up daily
Pursuing meaningless goals.
If, even for a tiny fragment of time,
you enter
Shambhu's chamber inside the
palace of your own
consciousness –
What is the point of all this
skirting about,

Following my elaborate wordy
descriptions? –
You will know the Truth yourself.

With these passionate, self-reflexively sarcastic lines in the grand Sanskrit metre called "Tiger's Sport" (*sardulavikriditam*), Abhinavagupta concludes his massive *-vivritti-vimarshini* on his teacher Utpaladeva's *Ishvara-pratyabhijna-karika* (IPK). In a rhetorical move that makes, as it were, to kick the ladder, Abhinavagupta, in the concluding portion of his commentary, invites those of his readers whose hearts have not yet been ossified to go beyond mere bookish knowledge, to take the plunge and to experience Truth for themselves.

In this verse, Abhinavagupta uses the accusative plural form of the second person pronoun, "*yusman*." Elsewhere, he focusses reflexively on the singular form, "*tvam*," that generic name of one's current listener, audience, interlocutor, with which one addresses the other, as an intimate friend or as a facing enemy. Why is Abhinavagupta addressing us and not the rocks? Because we move, we are going somewhere – we are "*jangama*." Only one who is alive and going can be meant by a "you," because only such a being can, in turn, mean me, address me back. As Wittgenstein famously remarked, meaning is like going up to someone. The conditions of addressing another person have been spelt out by Abhinavagupta in his *Paratrishika-vivarana* (PTV).

Because it ignores this speech-act of addressing, modern Western (Cartesian) thought not only finds the problem of the Other Mind hard to solve, but it also

ends up viewing the very presence of the other as existentially dread-worthy and self-annihilating as "hell" (Sartre, *No Exit*). Abhinava, on the contrary, is never tired of reminding us that "you" is already vibrant with selfhood. He insists that even if we try to look upon the other person's body as a mere physical object, the moment "this" is addressed in communication, it is completely enveloped with the I-feeling of the addressor. The "this" (*nara*) that is addressed as a "you" becomes an I-this (*idam-aham* = *sbakti*). The principle of addressing demands that when I say "Hey you! standing there," I mean that just as I stand and feel my cognition/ will/action manifest itself in my standing, your standing does that too, thus assimilating your I-ness into my I-ness, which together make possible an uninterrupted relishing of subjectivity. This is very far from a Being-With or *Mitsein* that the existentialist would come up with to overcome the problem of alterity.

The sense in which the addressor and the addressee, though different, become one in the addressing is indicative of the *parapara* Goddess, whose characteristic is identity in difference. (PTV 70-71, trans.)

I do not know if Ramchandra Gandhi has been actually influenced by a reading of these passages. But the basic insight behind his most strikingly original contribution to the theory of linguistic communication – his theory of addressing – is very clearly present in these and many other passages from Abhinavagupta. Professor Gandhi characterises addressing the second

person as a uniquely non-coercive, non-referential, quintessentially linguistic, non-causal inviting of the attention of the other person even as it acknowledges his or her freedom not to respond. Abhinava tells us that, in addressing the other, I address the subjective consciousness in the other, and thereby imagine myself to be addressed, and that in friendship and love we make an empathic re-discovery of the original unity of all apperception.

The second person, which is characteristic of Shakti, shedding its standard divisive use, acquires the aspect of the first person, which is characteristic of Shiva, when, for instance, one feels: "O dear friend! You indeed am I." (PTV 27, text)

There are important distinctions between the two theories, but they are both committed to strong non-dualism of consciousness, and they both tell us about the convertibility of the I into you and the you into I, through linguistic acts such as addressing and speaking of oneself as another, such as in "Look at me, this is myself! Fie on me."

Going many steps beyond Ramchandra Gandhi, Abhinava daringly claims that we do not need to speak out loud in order to self the other and other the self. The speech that makes this possible is inner speech, the very nature of self-consciousness, which has at its very heart a questioning and answering, calling and responding, meaning and being meant. To unveil the mystery of this free mutual convertibility of the you, the I and the he/she/it, we must turn to the concept of *vimarsha* as is elucidated in the following succinct – and at the same time poetic – passage

from the *Ishvarapratyabbijna-vimarshini*:

The free power of self-consciousness can bear all creative burden: it can turn the other into its own self, it can turn the self into another, it can identify the two, and it can turn down and transcend even this fusion of the self and the other . . . Such self-recovery is nothing other than inner speech – a speech that is not ruled by artificial semantic conventions, but is an uninterrupted relishing of natural signs like head-gestures made inwardly to oneself. (IPV 1.5.13)

Analysing *Vimarsha*: Freedom of Self-Creating Consciousness

Acute attentiveness to words is a feature shared by both the Vedic and Tantric traditions, both of which are brought seamlessly together in Abhinava's thought. In this section, we examine the word *vimarsha*, the word for that power of self-reflection that makes consciousness special, that makes it an illuminating substance. The verb "*vi-mrs*," from which the Kashmir Shaiva key-term "*vimarsha*" is derived, non-technically means any self-conscious cognitive or verbal activity that considers alternative possibilities. In both the positive and negative senses, it means thinking twice. Two processes essential to human consciousness proceed through consideration of alternatives or options. The first is the empowering activity of free choice; the second is the enfeebling activity of doubting. We take delight in choosing but we feel restless and unhappy while a doubt persists. For the Nyaya school, *vimarsha* means doubt, the pendulous

movement of thought that awaits settlement in favour of one of the specific alternatives. In the *Nyaya-sutra*, this word is used as a synonym of "doubt" – *visheṣaḥpekṣo vimarśaḥ saṃśayaḥ* (1.1.23). Though *vimarsha* does not mean doubt in Kashmir Shaivism, doubt – the root of all questioning – does play a very important role in the Shaiva epistemology. Abhinavagupta, in the first ahnika of his magnum opus, the *Tantraloka* (TA), delves deep into the phenomenology of doubt (TA 246-61). It would be a very interesting philosophical project to compare the Nyaya and the Kashmir Shaiva theories of doubt with the Cartesian theory of methodic doubt.

But neither Abhinava nor the father of the Indian philosophy of grammar, Bhartrihari, intend to signify doubt in the literal sense when they employ the word *vimarsha*. In Bhartrihari, *vimarsha* means that essentially linguistic articulated nature of human (even subhuman) intentional cognition without which even cognition would not be able to illumine things as its objects. To Abhinavagupta and to Utpaladeva before him, it means the essential freedom or power to will and choose without constraint, without which consciousness, for all its object-directedness, would be unconscious, much like mirrors and crystals.

The doubting mind uses "or" (*va*) when it wonders: is that a man or a tree-trunk out there in darkness? The choosing, electing, unconstrained agent also uses "or" when she says "I can either do x or y, as I wish." Both in Shaiva Tantra as well as in Bhartrihari's philosophy of language, *vimarsha* is that

special function of differentiating, articulating, inter-connecting self-reflection, without which the power of illuminating awareness (*prakasha*) would not be complete or capable. Far from being synonymous with doubt, *vimarsha* here is a necessary condition of certitude and assertive judgment. I cannot claim to be aware of either an external tree or an internal mental feeling unless I can distinguish the tree from the soil underneath, unless I can organise my successive perceptions of the trunk, the branches and the leaves into one synthesised judgment ("This is a tree") and unless I can *re-identify* the tree across multiple occasions of experience ("That same tree again"). This is why Bhartrihari remarks:

If awareness loses its language-like eternal character (*vag-rupata*), then even awareness would not be able to illuminate. This language-like grid of all thought is called *pratyavamarsha* or *vimarsha*. (VP 1.124).

Abhinava almost echoes Bhartrihari when he says *na hi nirvimarshah prakashah samasti, upapadyate* (TA 3), "illumination without articulation is neither possible nor intelligible."

But there is a difference of emphasis between Bhartrihari's and Abhinava's deployments of the concept of *vimarsha*. Bhartrihari uses the concept in the following argument to deduce the linguistic nature of all object-directed ordinary awareness:

Premise 1: Every objective awareness has an intentional content.

Premise 2: Intentional content can come only through articulating the

structure and recognitional function of *vimarsha*.

Premise 3: Wherever there is articulation, distinction and exclusion, there is the implicit presence of language.

Therefore, awareness of all kinds is implicitly shot through with speech.

Although Abhinava quotes Bhartrihari's verses (VP 123-124) with approval (in IPV 1.5.14), his own emphasis on the active, spontaneous, choosing nature of *vimarsha* goes beyond the thesis that all objective awareness is linguistic in character. Following Utpala (who after all refutes *sphotavada* while commenting on *Shivadrishhti*), he links it up with the *svatantrya* or performative freedom that is such a distinctive characteristic of the Kashmir Shaiva concept of knowledge. Unlike the subjective idealist Berkeley whose "perceptions" are passive receptions, and unlike the Yogacara-Buddhist *sva-samvedana* – the self presenting fleeting experiences – which are totally causally determined by previous dispositions and immediately preceding mental states (*sammanantara pratyaya*), Abhinava's knower-consciousness (*pramatr-samvit*) makes its own content willfully and creatively, projecting its own chosen film on this mirror-like screen of the mind.

The following is a rough sketch of Utpala's argument about the indispensability of *vimarsha* for any act of cognition:

Premise 1: A mirror or a crystal also reflects other objects. But it is inert. There is nothing that we can call the feel of what it is like to be a mirror. Consciousness has to be distinguished from such objects

because there is something that "feels like" to be conscious, and consciousness is not dependent upon a further revealer or recogniser.

Premise 2: What makes a crystal, mirror, etc., insentient and *samvit* (awareness) alive and self-aware is the absence and presence of the capacity to select and the freedom to grasp or not grasp – a capacity and freedom that insentient reflectors lack.

Premise 3: This free activity is *vimarsha*.

Therefore, *vimarsha* is what makes the light of consciousness special. Abhinava, commenting on this argument, encapsulated in a canonical *karika* in the IPV, says:

Had there been no self-conscious reflexivity in awareness, then the shine of awareness would have been inert and unconscious like the shine of crystals or mirrors, which also take on the form of the object they reflect. But awareness is conscious, not inert. Hence it must have that additional free self-reflexivity. (IPV 1.5.11)

Both these arguments – from the *Ishvarapratyabhijna-vimarshini* and the *Vakyapadiya* – are posed in what in Nyaya is called *tarka*, or counter-factual reasoning, of the form:

Had it been the case that Not-P,
then Q would not be possible.
But Q is possible.
Therefore p.

What is most fascinating is that, in the very context of speech, the *Chandogya-Upanishad* – a part of the *Sama-veda* –

employs exactly such a *tarka*, using the counter-factual (*Irri*) conjugation.

Had there been no speech, there would have been no knower obligations and prohibitions, no truth and falsity, no good or bad, no enchanting and disenchanting. It is speech which makes us know all these distinctions. Therefore worship speech. (7.2.1)

Notice also how in this passage *tarka* leads to *upasana*, reasoning becomes worship.

It is easy to recognise that we are free in imagination and willing, but are we free in knowledge or *pramiti*? Are we not totally at the mercy of the object or the world? Abhinava meets this worry frontally by showing how each of these three acts – which together make a conscious agent a knowing subject (*pramata*, consciousness in the form of the "I" that faces "all this," as well as, inversely, is faced by the other as a "you") – is always performed freely. The three basic functions of consciousness are the act of cognising (*jnana*), the act of excluding (*apohana*), and the act of remembering (*smriti*). Thus, for me to see this room is to focus on a selected part of my potentially all-encompassing field of consciousness (just these faces, that wall, and so on), then to separate them out from other inner and outer ideas that are also claiming my attention, and then to decide to recall some past experience through resemblances with which I classify and identify what I am now focussing upon. Abhinava elaborates upon this in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gita* passage beginning "*matthah smritir jnanam apohananca*" (BG 15.15), using,

again, our key-word, *vimarsha*. What must be remarked upon here is that the explanation of the free self-proliferation of *abanta* or I-ness leads him on to an allusion to omniscience and the creation of the great universe within oneself.

That is a good point of departure for touching briefly upon another key-word, *pratibha*, since *pratibha*-generated knowledge, according to Patanjali (*Yogasutra* 3.33), assumes the form of a saving (*taraka*) omniscience. The main philosophical points to be noted with regard to this very crucial concept of *pratibha* are:

- (1) Bhartrihari's epistemology of sentential-understanding and its links with practical knowledge and innate instinctive activities (which the VP 1.118 and 2.143-52 ascribe even to the awareness of subhuman creatures).
- (2) The role of *pratibha* as sort of creative genius and innovativeness in the poetic and aesthetic theory of Anandavardhana and Abhinava, and also the need for *pratibha* – insight – in the appreciator of poetry.
- (3) The place of *pratibha*-knowledge in the *Yogasutra* 3.33 and 3.49: conceptions of omniscience differ across the various schools of Indian philosophy.
- (4) The role of *pratibha* in Tantra philosophy and its relation with *para vak* and its welling up in the form of life-breath as well as a cosmic creative exuberance that is nevertheless searching for a peaceful resting place in the heart.
- (5) It appears to me, after consulting the sources that MM Gopinath Kaviraj refers to in his pioneering work, *The Doctrine of Pratibha in Indian Philosophy*, that we can isolate six general features of

the concept of *pratibha* in all these different manifestations in different schools of thought:

1. It is a *sudden* flash of synoptic awareness of the whole sentence meaning that exceeds the amalgamation of the separate elements of the word-meanings.
2. It is the power behind any successful poetic or musical or dramatic creation that charms and inspires a sense of awe and amazement and *rapture* (*chamatkara*) which makes us feel that "This is just right, nothing else would be appropriate in its place."
3. It is also a cognitive-imaginative-artistic excellence that spontaneously evokes responses in the like-hearted connoisseur, though it requires a corresponding *pratibha* for the relisher's heart to resonate with and savour the universalised sentiments transformed into that *rasa* or juice flowing from the intuition of a great poet.
4. It functions in a way that even the person employing the power does not know how it works, since it does not obey any determinate causal laws: *riyati krita niyama vibhita*.
5. It is responsible for all the freshness and novelty that flows out naturally like milk from the cow's udder, there being play on the meanings of the word *vak* as cow and *vak* as speech, and it is a talent that expresses itself through ever newer productions.
- (6) Though most brilliantly expressed in mystical omniscience or aesthetic creativity, this same *pratibha* also lies at the root of such basic unlearned capacities

as in the cuckoo's sweet voice and song in spring, and the child's ability to generate the fully grammatical utterances out of a few sample sentences from the adults around, or the basic knowledge of "do's and don'ts" that humans display in their daily existence.

Abhinavagupta himself, in nearly all his writings, offers enough evidence of this *pratibha* in almost all of the above six aspects, but I will here dwell upon only two such examples from his corpus. First, there is the age-old controversy between Mimamsa and Nyaya theories of knowledge regarding the "freshness" (*anadhyatava*) required for *knowledgehood*. The Mimamsakas insist that nothing counts as knowing unless it is cognising what was never cognised before. Thus, the already known cannot be known again. Knowledge must be fresh. The Nyaya school, on the other hand, more concerned with the veridicality and the correct causal lineage of the piece of knowledge in question, staunchly propounds the possibility that even what is perceived can be known again by a strengthening inference, and testimony can be knowledge-giving even about something that has been already seen or inferred. Where Mimamsa says that freshness is a precondition, Nyaya produces the counter-example of a continuous series of perceptions of the same object, say, of one's own hand. Abhinava steps into this debate in the fourth *abnika* of the *Tantraloka* (4.85), but with an intervention that only Abhinava could have made into the *heart* of epistemology, shifting, thereby, the locus of epistemology from the dried-up

intellectual Cartesian brain to the full-bodied *heart*: when a lover pleases his beloved woman first by seeing her with his eyes, then by embracing her for a long time, then by repeatedly ruminating on her with his mind, what shall we say about such repeated cognitions of the same object? Abhinava agrees with Nyaya that all the subsequent knowledge of the same object – tactile, introspective, inferential, or emotional – that is obtained after that object has already been visually perceived do equally deserve the title of knowledge of "*prama*." At the same time, Abhinava shows that the Mimamsa requirement of novelty holds because, though it is the same being that is seen, touched, loved, talked about and thought about, she is new each time, and this is because *pramana* is here working along with *pratibha*. Thus, the doctrine of the knowability of the same thing by many *pramanas* is preserved, and neither does this knowledge degenerate into the knowledge of an already cognised object.

The second example of Abhinava's *pratibha* I wish to offer also shows how he links up the most esoteric spiritual practice such as meditation on the *twelve* forms of the Goddess Kali with the most logical reconfiguration of the twelve epistemic *roles* played by a free-willing consciousness. The logical space for these epistemic phases or roles is generated by mathematically combining the *three* major *nodes*: *knower*, *means of knowing* and the *object known*, with the *four* major ontological *states*: the nameless state beyond Change, Creation, Stable Continuation, and Dissolution or

collecting back into the Original form. The resultant twelve states are interpretations of the twelve Tantric forms of Kali the mother! (TA 4.145-72)

Both in Indian and Western philosophy, a rift is often posited between reason and direct experience, logic and mysticism, conceptual philosophical thinking and yogic melting away of the mind. This conflict – I think – vanishes totally in Abhinavagupta's thought. He is well-known as a great Tantric teacher, a great musician and dramaturgist, and, above all, as a great devotional poet, who embellishes every chapter of each book with a gem of an invocation verse – describing intimate details of his own mystical experience, for example – but he was also a master of dialectic. Not only does he reinterpret the dialogue between Shiva and Parvati in many *Tantras* as the inner dialogue of *vimarsha* going on in every human heart, especially in the clear mind of the spiritual seeker, but he also reshuffles the yoga of Patanjali by making all the other eight steps of yoga, from *yama* to *Samadhi*, *subservient* to the most important supreme *means* of self

realisation – “good reasoning.” This insight, I submit, links up the “or” of doubt with the equipoise achieved between two philosophical positions through good reasoning with the “or” of *vimarsha* – a *vimarsha* that leads to the blissful non-duality of pure Shiva-consciousness. Such *tarka* as we saw in the passage from the *Chandogya-Upanishad* directly grounds our *upasana*, and our very argumentation becomes the offerings of the most intricately structured flowers of syllogisms, as echoed in Udayana's title for his book on God, *Nyayakushimanjali*. We now turn to another word, in English an anagram of the word “*vimarsha*,” namely, the word “*vishrama*,” which means the same as the word “*visranti*.”

Drenching the You with the I: Phenomenological Analysis of the Concept of *Vishranti* or Repose

Abhinavagupta was more candidly autobiographical than most classical Indian philosophers. Not only does he address his future readers directly, sometimes – as we noted at the start of this essay – impatiently inviting his

	Knower	Means of knowing	Known
The Nameless	Mahabhairava-Chandogra Kali (TA 4.171-172)	Martanda Kali (TA 4.163)	Yama Kali (TA IV)
Creation	Paramarka-Kali (TA 4.167)	Samhara Kali (TA 4.152)	Srishti Kali (TA 4.148)
Stability	Kalagni-rudra Kali (TA 4.168)	Mrttyu Kali (TA 4.154)	Rakta Kali (TA 4.149)
Dissolution	Mahakala Kali (TA 4.170)	Bhadra/Rudra Kali (TA 4.158)	Sthiti-naasha Kali (TA 4.150)

readers to experience Truth for themselves, but he speaks to them in his own personal voice. We know next to nothing about the life or family of Kumarila, Shankara, Vachaspati or Udayana from their own writing, but from the poetic and passionate descriptions (both in the *Tantraloka ahnika* 37), as well as at the end of the *Paratrishika-vivarana*), of his ancestors' migration from Anturvedi to the beautiful and holy valley of Kashmir on the banks of the incomparable river "Vitasta" (Jhelum), of his mother Vimalakala's passing away during his infancy, of his exceptional aunt Vatsalika and her devotion to Shiva, of his own cousin, brother, nephew and disciples, and, above all, of his teachers in different branches of learning, we get a fairly vibrant picture of his personality. In one of the invocation verses of the *Isbhvara-pratyabhijna-vritti-vimarshini* (IPVV), Abhinava describes, with his usual metaphorical flair, the mature frame of mind with which he was writing this second elaborate sub-commentary on a text that he has already written a gloss on:

I have cleansed myself first by
bathing fully in grammar;
I have collected the flowers of
discerning wisdom that
grow
In that wish-granting creeper of
insightful imagination
Which grows out of the roots of
good reasoning,
And I worshiped the Lord of my
heart with them;
I have enjoyed the benefits of such
beautiful great literature
and poetry

As can be compared with liquor
made out of the essence of
Ambrosia;

Now, in the company of my
beloved lady, discourse on
divine non-duality, I am
going to repose
(*vishramyamī*).

This verb "*vi-shram*" – to rest – is the root of that polymorphic philosophical term "*vishranti*" which pervades Abhinava's writings on epistemology, metaphysics, aesthetics, phenomenology of rituals and rational theology. Understanding this term, I submit, is as central to understanding the triadic philosophy of recognition (*pratyabhijna*), just as comprehension of the more celebrated term "*vimarsha*" is recognised to be. "*Vimarsha*" has received some exegetical attention in English, but "*vishranti*" has not. The purpose of this section is to explore the different aspects of the meaning and use of this term in Abhinavagupta's philosophy, and to forestall some possible misunderstandings that result from easy association with the ordinary notions of resting, retiring, simple quiescence, or arresting of the movements of a tired mind.

Anyone who has wrestled with the complex argumentation, the mixing of esoteric meditation techniques with conceptual logical subtlety, the relentless play of hermeneutic imagination, the amazing width of erudition, and incisiveness of psychological observations of the *Isbhvara-pratyabhijna-vritti-vimarshini* would know that it is anything but the work of a tired retiring intellect.

Abhinavagupta was, for sure, not “giving his intellect a rest” and indulging in leisurely or desultory thinking in this incessantly polemical and intricately analytical commentary. It evinces, if anything, a mind that climbs up higher and higher flights of the endless stairs of thinking, *never knowing what it is to feel exhausted* (NS-ABh, ch. 4).

Perhaps that is the root of our key-term – *vigata sranitir yasmāt sa avastha*, that state of being from which all tiredness has vanished, an inexhaustible freedom from exhaustion. In an ecstatic crescendo of gradually deeper descriptions in the *Tantraloka* (*abhnika* 6, verses 9-13), Abhinavagupta passes from the empty nature of the objectless clear sky of consciousness to its tendency to transform itself to an intentional awareness of objects and to fall on them in the form of a wavy brimming over of vibrating sentience, taking concrete organic shape in the form of vital breath, which finally rests in fullness as the light of omniscience in the heart of a Yogin in rapture. In this climactic verse, following the basic Vedic-Tantric common principle of “everything is of the nature of everything else,” he equates repose with many other things:

This is that power of vitality which stirs up all inner initiatives with desire, and it is known alternatively as *spanda* (vibration), *spṣuratta* (exuberant self-manifestation), *visṣranti* (repose), *jīva* (life/or soul), *hṛt* (heart), and *pratibha* (the light of creative intuition or omniscience). (TA 4.13)

But these identities or equations are not very helpful in understanding the specific nuances of each of these concepts. Surely, when asked, “What is repose?” the answer, “Repose is nothing but *pratibha*, which is the heart,” is not going to be illuminating at all. It is only after understanding the differences between these concepts and appreciating their individual significance that the equation or synthetic identification is going to be surprising and informative. So, what is *visṣranti*, or repose, as we shall translate it?

I think I can isolate at least seven different – but obviously interlinked – aspects to this key concept from my limited exposure to the Kashmir-Shaiva literature. These are:

1. Repose as ontological and epistemological terminus.
2. Repose as substance/self.
3. Repose as natural fulfillment, satisfaction, and, therefore, fullness.
4. Repose as the playful self-savouring creative leisure (thrilling tranquility) of the feelings of the heart.
5. Repose as freedom.
6. Repose as a practical spiritual method for focussing attention to connectedness or the relational middle between subject and object and other binaries within any (intensely felt) sensation whatsoever, and thereby “purifying” an object of sensation by immersing it in non-egoistic subjective awareness.
7. Repose as the greatest Goddess,

beyond all temporal succession, in the heart.¹

I shall discuss below only the first three aspects in some depth due to constraints of space, the textual support for the other four aspects being very vast.

Terminus

To start with, "terminus" can be used in the ontological sense of a stopping place or foundation for metaphysical explanations, where, as Wittgenstein put it (in *On Certainty*) "the spade turns." Subjective (but non-private) consciousness is that stopping-place. In our inward search for roots, we cannot dig beyond the nameless "I" which Kant called the transcendental unity of apperception. Everything – physical or mental, living or non-living, thing or process – that appears or manifests itself as an object of knowledge, or even that which is missed as unfelt or mentioned as an object of ignorance, as something that is unapprehended (*anupalabdha*) at a particular time, ultimately rests on the light of consciousness. For, nothing is given unless it is given to an awareness. Nothing is noted as absent except when it is absent to an awareness. This is, of course, the underlying idealism of Abhinavagupta's "*abhāsa-vāda*" or "*samvedana-naya*." But the arguments through which Utpala and Abhinava establish this foundational character of consciousness are not to be found, for instance, in Berkeley or Bradley. Instead of refuting the reality of relations of

distinctions, as monists or idealists have usually done, Utpala establishes the undeniable objectivity and omnipresence of relations. And then Abhinava brings out how to exist is to be related to something else, and to be related is to be recognised as mutually awaiting or "tending towards each other" by a recognising awareness. So, ultimately the foundation of all entities is relations and the foundation of all relations is a unifying or synthesising consciousness. And this unifying consciousness has to take the form of a self-ascription which feels itself to be a single "I," not just one objectifiable artificial knower-ego (*māya-pramāta*) among other possible egos, but an all encompassing I-awareness, in the light of which everything else is illuminated. In his gloss on verses 1-3, Abhinava not only quotes the *Kātha-Upanishad*: "After Him being shining (*tam eva bhāntam anu . . .*), everything shines, It is by His light that all this is lit," but he invites us to meditate creatively on the grammar of the Vedic expression *tam bhāntam* ("Him keeping-shining"), which is derived by adding a *s'atr* suffix to the verb "*bha*" – to shine or manifest itself – and then forming an accusative because of the dependency-particle "*anu*," meaning after. Depending upon the constantly spontaneously independently effulgent Self-Consciousness (*s'atr* suffix signifies "perpetually shining"), by mimicking (*whom* does it mimic? the one that keeps shining. Hence the accusative after the

¹ The Trivandrum edition of *Mahānāyaprakāśa* (verse 57, Ullāsa 9) reads: *vishrantih parama devī kalopadhi-vivarjita savikalpavikalpanam sarvasam samvidalayah*.

"*bha + s'atr*"), as it were, the agentive aspect of "making" or "creating" present in that Self, individual selves establish the relation of knower-and-known with objects they then call "this," and then again "this," in an imposed temporal order. But if we start from the side of these – by themselves unconnected – objects, we cannot stop the analysis until we make these objects all "turn towards" and "rest in" (*abhimukhyena visbrantim bhajante*), be objects of and for that great unifying ocean of sentience or self-aware awareness. That ocean, *samvit-mahasamudra*, is the metaphysical end-point where all these beings, both external, such as a blue colour or a blue substance, and internal, such as a feeling of joy or pain, merge like so many rushing rivers meeting in an ocean (IPV, 1: 350-56).

The idea is further simplified. Take any object, a stone, for instance. A stone exists. But it is not complete in itself. It pretends to be limited to itself and self-terminated (notice Utpala's expression, *arthanam sva-samāpinam* (IPK 1.8.3). But it is nothing at all until it is registered in a consciousness, related to other things, synthesised with its other time-slices and with what many people can see from many sides, with all its parts and glimpses. Yet, "how can there be synthesis or putting together of discrete self-terminated self-contained objects or cognitions" (IPV 1: 358), unless they figure in someone's judgement connecting it to other things or at least to a consciousness, of the form: "There is a stone here on the ground or to the left of that other

stone." Now, this judgement needs support from a more foundational awareness: "It appears as if or feels like there is a stone here." And this "what it is like to feel as if there is a stone out there" needs an "I" to which it has to feel some way. Until it comes to this "I"-consciousness, no physical or mental, abstract or concrete, particular or general entity can come to rest or be grounded in unquestionable existence.

Since this is not merely the Cartesian point that the self is the first certainty and the foundation-stone in rebuilding an edifice of knowledge once destroyed by methodic scepticism, we must focus more on the assumed argument, "No object without relation, and no relation without a unifying I-consciousness," to get the idea of an ontological terminus.

Let us try to follow Abhinava's "argument from relations" in some more detail. When any two items are seen or mentioned together, such as "a man and a horse," "an apple-tree and an orange-tree," they are thereby conjoined and related. And most strikingly, whenever we say even that this differs from that, the two distinct things are also shown to be related, for even distinction is a limiting case of relation. Unless the same continuous awareness registers two things together, they can not be registered as distinct. But to be related, the Kashmir Shaiva would add, is to be connected to the same consciousness which recognises the relation, for an unrecognised relation is as good as nonexistent. And consciousness can illuminate only what is essentially within the light of self-awareness. So

everything that is other than other things is also unified with those things by participating in the same unifying awareness or Self. Thus the self becomes the ontological foundation or repose of physical phenomena such as a blue pot, or mental phenomena such as a happy feeling.

When a limited individuated consciousness – a *maya pramata* – distinguishes between any two things or any two people or between himself and another person, it actually weaves them together by the thread of that common subjective awareness which, as Abhinavagupta is fond of saying over and over again, finds its resting place in the “I.” Not only do we need a unified self to assert the sameness between what was seen before and what is being touched now, even to assert the utter otherness between two objects, or to notice that a certain (remembered or expected) thing is now not seen, we need to presuppose the identity of the self that sees them to be distinct hence related, which imagines what it would feel like if the object were seen and then fails to find that feeling.

Going along with the Buddhist opponent to some extent, the Shaiva philosopher admits that othering or separation constitutes the very life of manifold self-cognising intentional appearances: whatever appears to be its object must be distinguished from the awareness itself, and awareness itself is set apart from that object, one awareness is distinguished from another, and one appearing object from another such object. Indeed a cognition is called

pariccheda (a demarcating grasp) because it consists in such tailoring from all sides, *paritah chedanat pariccheda uchyate* (IPV 1.3.7). But each act of “othering” or excluding is also an act of joining together. All our descriptions of and participations in actions depend upon our occupying the action-related roles that are classified as “cases” (*karaka*) in grammar. Thus we are always casting ourselves and our objects in the roles of nominative, accusative, instrumental, dative, ablative and locative, etc. But, through the door of these action-related roles, all that exists and happens in the world is inter-related because they are all related eventually to an observer’s consciousness, which registers these relations and is ready to carve them up into these semantic verb-centred categories: “This variegated conduct of common life is surely ruled by relation,” *sambandhadhina eva citra iyam lokayatra* (IPV 2: 49). And, as Abhinava notes in one of his flashy side-remarks: “since it is related it cannot be unconscious . . . the moment it gets into a relation, even the earth (clay) of the pot becomes non-inert” (*yato’arthasya sambandhi tato na jadah . . . tarbi sambandhamatrena mrt api ghatasya iti ajada syat* [IPV 1: 241]); nothing that is related to anything else can find its terminus anywhere outside consciousness, the ultimate relation-maker.

This is the sense in which the world of practice, the world of objects of knowledge, and the world of imagination ultimately come to rest in the subject of consciousness, the “I-consciousness.” It is a resting place

because it is the final unifier. It is final because the series of illuminated-needling-an-illuminator or supported-awaiting-a-supporter comes to an end here. Everything is lit by this I-consciousness and this I-consciousness does not need to be lit by any further recogniser. No inquirer or justifier tries to question or justify the "I."

As has been recently discovered by Raffaele Torella, the *reductio-ad-absurdum* argument (*prasanga-prasanga-viparyaya*) that is behind this complex claim was fully laid out by Utpala himself in the regrettably mostly-lost *Vivritti*. In this text Utpala remarks: "For cognitions never manifest themselves separately from it; though they may show a certain level of differentiation superimposed by the differentiation of their contents, yet, despite this delimitation due to spatio-temporal distinctions, they ultimately rest, to be sure (*vishrantir eva*), on their own nature consisting of a single and unitary consciousness (*eka-chit*)." (This is a fragment of the original *Vivritti*, on IPK 1.3.7, that Torella has recovered, edited and translated.) Again we see Utpala using the key term "*vishranti*."

Substance/Self

In commenting upon IPK 1.5.12, Abhinava remarks:

That is called a substance, by resting in which, all sets of objects (entities meant by our referring terms) appear (shine) and are also used and wanted for serving practical purposes, and – if you don't get annoyed (this is a common rhetorical device to warn that something unpalatable to the

materialist or realist is going to be said now) – all this plethora of entities together making up a world out there objectively solid in itself, after all, find their repose (and substratum) only in consciousness. Just as qualities and actions and events and other properties rest of a chief substance, hence this consciousness must be the chief Substance of all.

This idea of repose is a bit different from the idea of "terminus of analysis." Especially, Abhinava plays on the verb behind the common object-word, "*artha*," which means "to be wanted." When for practical purposes, not just for art or fiction, someone wants a pot or a house, it has to be a substantial pot of clay or metal or stone, which can carry water, a real brick or wood or stone house that can give you shelter. Minus the substance or stuff, the clay, the stone, the wood, the metal, the mere form of a pot or the qualities of a house would not satisfy our "*arthana*," our wantings. Similarly, however accurately we may capture the physical being of an object, unless it appears in experience, unless it is manifested in awareness, unless it rests under the shining all-pervading self-illuminating light of consciousness, it is of no use to us. Hence consciousness is the principal Substance of the universe, because in it all objects find themselves, and find their basis for being useful. So even when we are trying to think objectively (minus my own mind, as it were) about what the object is in itself, the object finds its self or the substance in it being of some use to a conscious experience.

Hence the self all-things-in-themselves is that one Self which is the Great Lord that is I. Abhinava seems to be never tired of explaining this point from as many angles as possible with as many analogies and as many arguments and as many etymological analyses as can be had. He winds up the discussion here by saying: *tat anantadharmarasi-vishramabhitti-bhutayah tasyaah (samvidah) sa eva dharamah chaitanyam*: "this consciousness is that property identical with that substantial consciousness that serves as the resting foundation of infinite multiplicity of all other properties."

Contentment/Fullness

Abhinava, in his most favourite work, the *Malinivijayavartika-tantra*, makes this interesting remark: *svatmavisrantir evaisa devasya ananda uchyate*, "what is called the joy of this Lord is his repose in himself" (10, 1.88). Elsewhere, words such as "*tripti*" (satisfaction) and "*paritosha*" (heart's content) are used to mean this same state of not thirsting any more, being content. The intentional outwardness of ordinary limited mental states, and the need to be illuminated and acknowledged by a mind found in ordinary limited knowable objects are all signs that these mental and material things do not rest in themselves, that they depend on or hanker after something other than themselves. Yet a certain hint of satisfaction or temporary relief from yearning is found when a needy intentional awareness finds and feasts on the very object that it wanted and the object also finds its relatedness and recognition in that intentional

awareness. This hint shows that at the confluence of knower and known, eater and the food, enjoyer and the relishable juice of artwork, consciousness finds a natural repose in itself. This expresses itself as a provisional completion of the cognitive, emotional, or aesthetic process, as a sense of satisfaction: *svabhaviki atmanistha purnataa*, a sense of not wanting anything besides anymore. When self-consciousness finds such satisfaction within itself by inventing its own other as an object, pretending to be distinct from but projecting a relationship to it, and then rediscovering itself by denying that distinction (*tatha hi avyatirikta-prakashasya ya svatmani visrantir ahamiti anullikbhita-pratiyogikalpana, tadaropana, tadapasaranadika*, IPVV 1: 105) in the renewed feeling "It was I who have been shining through this thing over there which is also of the nature of illumination," and exploring the unending contentment of self-discovery, then it "considers all its roles of knower, instrument of knowledge, the known object – all of them to have been fulfilled, and does not want anything further" (IPVV 1: 243).

This sense of not wanting anything else naturally leads also to the other two senses of repose, the sense in which to experience repose is to enjoy freedom – not depending upon anything else. The discussion of *rasa* and especially the *rasa* of peace or tranquility in the *Abhinavabharati*, on the sixth chapter of the *Natyashastra*, famously comments: "It is restlessness that is suffering." To the extent that it is possible for people, even in the world of entertainment and art, to attain intense, undisturbed,

unobstructed (by such thoughts as "Is this factually real? When is it going to end? Hope this does not happen to me!") relishing of pure, intense joy in representations of erotic love or of ridicule or great pathos or horror or utter amazement: even here their hearts find blissful relaxation because, after all, such aesthetic savouring of a pure emotion is the embodiment of repose.

Thus, this idea of "resting" (*visbranti*) is not merely a metaphor for the metaphysical and epistemic structure-foundation relation. It also brings out the close link between cognition and emotion, between desire and knowledge, between consciousness and aesthetic rapture. A cognition or a presentation or mental representation or a desire "rests" only where it finds complete satisfaction, where all its thirsts are quenched. And all cognitions ultimately find such a rest in the limitless Self alone.

Our modern and Western notion of positive freedom – that some affluent countries are now trying violently to teach some other poorer traditional societies – is not at all consonant with the idea of repose. A certain measure of fidgety restlessness, now choosing one thing and then choosing something else, and a certain cultivated sense of dissatisfaction, regretful retrospective imagination of what else one could have been done, feverish jolting changes of life-trajectories, and perpetual discontent seem essential to this kind of freedom of choice. Just being unconstrained and independent is not enough, even to attain the typical Western idea of creative freedom. A free

artist often indulges in extreme behaviour, cutting off his own ears or drinking himself to death or engaging in a haughty duel, etc. From such a point of view, repose and contentment sound like the very opposite of freedom of the spirit. It sounds more like an arresting of all activities and a death of all desires. (The worry springs from the usual *moksha*-phobia of the Western or Westernised Indian mind.) How can we explain the idea of a thrillingly creative tranquility, the idea of the heart's fullness and thirstlessness, as an inexhaustible exhilaration of self-marvelling that does not require a really alien other to play with, but can be playful within itself?

The answer to this can be found by taking a closer look at Abhinava's description of *visbranti*, this time not as a metaphysical accomplished fact, but as something we are instructed to perform as a meditational task. In the unjustly-neglected *Paryanta-Panchashika* (PP, which I have translated as "The Final Fifty," and which is the source of my opening epigraph), which begins by consecrating the process of philosophical dialectic between proponent and opponent with the identification of both parties and both views with Bhairava – the free-self-contracting self-expanding self-relishing consciousness – Abhinava tells us how to "purify" the impure objects, the impure sensations and practices of ordinary life.

To take externalised objects and immerse them into one's own innermost I-ness is purification. Impurity is nothing but the state when even though immersed they

do not bring repose to the heart. (PP, verses 9-10)

Thus, while the Shiva-consciousness also has its active power, and the power to create distinctions by contracting itself and then expanding itself, by denials and affirmations, by exclusions and inclusions, by revelling in entertaining options and imaginary possibilities, true freedom is not attained until the world of things and ideas is wholly "purified" (read subjectivised). And secret instructions for this purification process are contained in the carefully-shrouded language of the *Vijnana-bhairava*, from where Abhinava likes to quote that crucial line, "what is special about the Yogin is attention to the relation."

Repose becomes freedom in every sense when the heart witnesses its own great power of creating and effacing differences and relishes the egoless "middle" of that process of tasting any sensation or experience without becoming fettered to either the taster or the tasted. Objections may be raised at this point to the effect that Abhinavagupta's characterisation of this restful subjectivity suffers from an internal incoherence. Abhinava describes it as the self-transcendence and limit-bursting nature of consciousness, when consciousness is contrasted with the inert, which is self-confined and limited. Yet it is in virtue of the same repose that consciousness is said to be utterly independent of other things and self-contained. Which kind of freedom, then, does consciousness enjoy? The satisfied (bored?) finished and fulfilled kind, or the ever-creative ever-uncompleted self-enhancing kind?

This objection may be answered by underlining the double nature of repose. Unlike the insentient material object (whose materiality is ultimately illusory) which just sits there limited and finished in its own gross solidity, consciousness continually adds to itself, subtracts from itself, links back with previous states of consciousness in its search for synthesis (*samyojana*, *viyojana*, *anusamdhana*) and reveals itself without waiting for any other entity. This lack of self-confinement and yet, lack of other-dependence, makes it quietly climb itself – or self-climbing, to translate the beautiful synonym for "repose" that Utpaladeva chooses, *atmarohanam*, climbing upon oneself, again explained in terms of resting by Abhinava: *atmanica arohanam visvramana* (IPV 1.4.4, 1: 168-69). To translate a bit from Utpala's *Ajadapramatrsiddhi*:

The repose of the light in itself is called the supreme condition of the I. Because it is an absolute independence from every other being, it is autonomy, agency, and Lordship, in the primary sense.

(22-23)

This playful inexhaustibility within any particular state of oneself has nothing to do with discontent or unrest. It is a perfectly tranquil will to divide and unite, to explore one's own infinite possibilities without waiting for anything external, a resting in freedom without any arresting of self-renewing movement. And, as a spiritual practice, one can tune in with this perpetually ongoing process of Shiva consciousness by drowning all external objects into the inward *egoless I*.

While suggesting a cultivation of such quiet subjectifying repose of external objects in inward self-consciousness as purification, both Abhinavagupta and Bhaskara, his commentator, warn against some common pitfalls. Some people may mistake the provisional resting place of ordinary sensual enjoyment – where also the Tantric method encourages us to practice this “attention to the juncture of connection” – to be the final resting place. If someone thinks that he is God because he has now become completely silent and lost himself totally in the sense-object – finding Samadhi in sexual enjoyment – let us say, or has found repose in his greedy enjoyment of worldly consumable objects, he is merely deceiving himself and pretending to be fully content: *ye tu etena vishaya rasika api paramatma-vishrantim abhinayanti tesam sav-banchakatvam eva* (Bhaskari, IPV 1: 278). (Interestingly, it is in the *Bhaskari* [on both pages 78 and 278] that we find one of the few mentions, in Indian philosophy, of the problem of self-deception, a problem that has been so widely discussed in Western thought.)

Real rest has to be found back within oneself, with no dependence on external objects. The other places of repose, such as the practice of concentration on sense-objects, on the sensory process itself, or even on a personal God or a deity are, according to Abhinava, like stops under a tree midway through the long journey to one's final destination in the village.

When one finally comes home, the heart of all repose is recognised to be in the infinite sky – the blissful (sonorous)

blank in the middle of one's own heart. One's egoless “I” can joyfully embrace all pleasures and sorrows, all victories and defeats, all things and beings without either craving for or abjuring anything at all. Such perfect rest is also the source of unlimited variations of the joyous play of will and unconstrained love. From that love, we are told by Shruti and Agama, all linguistic eloquence gushes forth, but it is itself an “unutterable” (*anuccharya*) state of speech where speech cannot go.

This may prove that all that a single person comes to apprehend is somehow interconnected with a self-enjoying creative I-consciousness, which weaves them into some sort of oneness that is tolerant of a projected plurality. But what about the distinction between one knower and another, between myself and others? Abhinava's argument to overcome this problem is a very subtle one (IPV 1: 75-76). First, let it be admitted that my own consciousness is known to me directly. I know what it is like to be self-aware and aware of objects. And if, say in the context of an effort at empathy with a friend, I feel acutely that I am not feeling this friend's own emotions, as a missed feeling don't I have to subjectively be aware of those emotions, in however inadequate a fashion? In that sense, couldn't the unfelt pleasures and pains of another person become objects of my direct awareness as what I fail to feel, just as a remembered event is experienced by the same experiencer as what is not now happening? My self-awareness manifests itself through my bodily activities, and I notice others' bodily activities just as

immediately as I notice my own, though there are differences of access set up by our habitual walls of individuality. Now, the observable actions of sentient beings are quite distinct from mere physical movements. As Abhinava remarks in IPVV (1: 105), the movement of a living being is not like the movement of water, neither is the motionlessness of a person sitting similar to the motionlessness of a stone. Everywhere, it is undeniable that we notice the actions of others as actions enlivened by self-sentient "feels." Just as "He knows" is spoken as an abbreviation of "He is in a position to say "I know," similarly, "He walks" is said in the sense that he is able to make himself aware that "I am walking." Thus, even others' actions are observed (not inferred) by us to be shimmering with the same subjectivity as we feel behind our own voluntary actions. We must reject the suggestion that our knowledge of other minds is merely an analogical inference. The word Utpala uses in the context (IPK 1.1.4) of our awareness of consciousness in other bodies is *ubhate*, which, Abhinava clarifies, does not mean that others' sensations are merely analogically inferred. To do "*ubha*" is to intuitively extrapolate, directly postulate from "otherwise inexplicability," to make it highly likely. Here, the process is partly a function of our sense-organs: we see that the other is in pain, we can feel their pleasure (sometimes more than at other times). Thus, the word *ubha* signifies "direct acquaintance" – *atra amse indriya-vayaparanam api asti tatascha sakshatkaram upalakshayati "ubha"* (IPVV 1: 101).

When we are thus directly aware of the power of activity in others' bodies as something cognitive and conscious, this awareness inside others does not appear to us as a "this," as a mere inert material property. To be a "this" is to be non-cognitive, non-conscious. Whatever the modern brain-mind identity theorist may say, when I say and *see* that my friend is in pain or my daughter is singing happily I don't mean thereby that she is undergoing some physical objective event in her C-fibres or in her amygdala or somewhere else in her body. I mean (even if I don't feel it as mine) exactly the same sort of thing that I mean when I say that I am in pain or I am singing (something as subjectively feelable as that). If a state of consciousness appears as a "this thing out there," then it is not appearing as a state of consciousness at all, hence it is as good as not appearing. But others' states of consciousness are "seen" in their faces and postures. Therefore even others' mental states appear to us as subjective, as connected to the I. The otherness only belongs to the adjuncts and dividers such as these outer bodies, but the consciousness ascribed to them, qua consciousness, rests on the I-ness of the knower-in-general, as much as my own consciousness rests on the I-ness. Thus even the awareness of the other is after all continuation of one's own Self!

Conclusion

Abhinavagupta is, certainly, primarily a spiritual teacher: whenever he gets the chance, he hints at his own direct spiritual experience and encourages us to

feel it in our own hearts. But this experience – in its logical, moral, aesthetic and religious levels – is an integrated synthesis of study, reasoning, meditation, ritual, literary genius, art-appreciation, altruistic compassion and creative imagination. Abhinavagupta is also relentless in arguing with and against Buddhism, Samkhya, Nyaya and Mimamsa, and uses strict logical reasoning and keen philosophical analysis all through, recommending this *tarka* as the way of the powerful (*shaktopaya*), as the best of all Yogas (TA, *abnika* 4).

One of the things that I have tried to show via some glimpses of Abhinava's philosophical reasoning is that logical analysis and spiritual meditation need not be enemies or irreconcilable

polarities: they can be mutually as complementary as emotion and knowledge, *bhakti* and *jnana*, are known to be. Abhinavagupta's metaphysic of consciousness, extremely rich in arguments, is an intricately analytical engagement with timeless issues in the philosophy of mind, and, indeed, is a sophisticated phenomenology of perception, emotions and the body. Its formidable subtlety and its uncompromising non-dualism should not blind us to its great relevance to contemporary cognitive science and analytic philosophy. Just to try to honestly "study" the thread of his arguments, I submit, is a form of self-transforming meditation, a tasting of the tranquility of repose.

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Toward a Cognitive Science of Poetics: Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, and the Theory of Literature

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ROY BHASKAR HAS REMARKED that realists are unblushingly fallibilist and historicist about science.¹ They feel no need to be “uncritical and ‘complimentary’ about everything that passes for knowledge or is done in science’s name ... no reason to ‘buy in’ to shoddy science.... Nor do they feel under any imperative to write the story of science Whiggishly as one long continuous success story – without blemishes or periods of stasis and even regression” (156). The point holds for the physical sciences, but is most obvious with respect to the human sciences and the study of the arts. Indeed, it is particularly important to those of us who have rejected what Noam Chomsky (following Donald Hockney) calls the “bifurcation thesis” (roughly, the thesis that objects in physics, chemistry, etc., are real, but objects in linguistics, psychology, etc., are not [see Chomsky 16-22]), those of us who believe that there are ascertainable facts about the human mind, society, and art, facts open to systematic scientific investigation.

There are a number of problems with “Whiggish” history in any discipline. First of all, there are economic, political, and ideological factors which frequently vitiate our evaluations of theories. These factors are particularly evident when the indigenous sciences of a colonised people (e.g., classical Sanskrit poetics) are at issue, though they operate at all times and at all places. Secondly, even in evaluation that is motivated by and focussed on genuinely scientific concerns, it is not always possible to understand or appreciate the explanatory

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power of a theory or hypothesis. Sometimes, a full appreciation of the value of a theory in one area must await the development of our understanding in other areas. This is what happens when we refer to a theory as "ahead of its time." Perhaps the best-known cases of this come from linguistics. Chomsky has repeatedly argued that the rationalist linguistics of the seventeenth century was far superior to the behavioural linguistics of the mid-twentieth century. However, this superiority was unrecognisable as the theoretical insights of the earlier authors far exceeded the state of psychological and related understanding in Europe during that period. Rationalist linguistic theory reached a sort of dead end in then-contemporary psychology, anthropology (which provided inadequate knowledge of non-European languages), etc. It was only after the intervening developments (not only in linguistic psychology, anthropology, and so on, but also in mathematics and elsewhere) that the research project adumbrated in this work could really begin. More germane to our concerns, Paul Kiparsky has shown that generative grammar was first developed in India by the Sanskrit grammarians, pre-eminently Panini, in the fifth century BCE. (It is generally acknowledged that classical Indian linguistic science was vastly superior to the science of the West until very recently.) It was, however, subsequently forgotten, as there was no broader scientific context – and, one might add, no broader political context – in which its generative principles could be adequately appreciated. Its value came

to be recognised only after the development of Chomskyan linguistics in the late 1950s and 1960s.

In the following pages, I would like to consider Sanskrit poetic theory in a similar context. Starting more than two millennia ago, and extending over a millennium, Sanskrit theorists developed an elaborate theory of poetics which was closely allied with linguistic study and, in my view, equally brilliant – though also equally ignored in the West. I would attribute our ignorance of this theory principally to imperialism and racism, but there are also factors relating to the theory itself. Specifically, this theory reached a culmination and a sort of theoretical impasse in the writings of Abhinavagupta. However, in developing the theory, Abhinavagupta anticipated current principles of cognitive science, much as Panini anticipated current principles of generative grammar. Now, with the aid of cognitive science, it is possible to recognise the value of Sanskrit poetics and to develop them beyond the impasse they had reached in the eleventh century. There is, however, a difference between this situation and the cases of Panini or the rationalist linguists. In the case of Panini and the rationalists, current theories, in effect, rediscovered the insights of the earlier writers, so that by the time these insights were rediscovered they had already become part of contemporary thought. Indeed, it was because these early principles had been independently rediscovered that the early theory came to be appreciated as an historical precursor. The situation with Sanskrit

poetics is, in this respect, substantially different. In my view, we still have no adequate or even productive and plausible theory of aesthetic creation and response. What I hope to indicate, then, is not that the insights of Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, and others have been rediscovered in cognitive science. Rather, I hope to indicate that, when redeveloped in the context of cognitive science as a broad theory of the human mind, the work of these writers provides us with a plausible and productive cognitive theory of poetics. In other words, the theory of Abhinavagupta does not anticipate a currently developed sub-field within cognitive science, but rather might serve to guide the development of such a sub-field.

More exactly, I shall begin with a broad outline of Sanskrit poetics from its beginnings through Anandavardhana (for a more detailed discussion, the reader may wish to consult a history of Sanskrit poetics, for example, that of Gerow). Roughly speaking, Anandavardhana sought to develop and systematise previous ideas in Sanskrit theory in order to provide an adequate description of poetic effect. Abhinava took up Anandavardhana's descriptive ideas and sought to provide an explanatory framework for them; the second section is consequently devoted to the explanatory views of Abhinavagupta. In the third section, I turn to contemporary cognitive science, first presenting what I take to be a plausible, partial theory of the internal "lexicon" (or mental dictionary/encyclopedia), then going on to

reformulate Abhinavagupta's views in terms of this theory.

Anandavardhana and Suggestion

Histories of Sanskrit poetics generally divide early Indian theories into two broad traditions: *alamkara* and *rasa*. *Alamkara* or "ornamentation" refers to a range of poetic devices and rhetorical figures from alliteration to metaphor. In itself, the *alamkara* tradition is of limited interest, for it hardly extends beyond taxonomy (e.g., listing and describing the varieties and sub-varieties of figures such as the simile). On the other hand, without this often tedious program of analysis and categorisation, including its rudimentary literary semantics, Anandavardhana could never have formulated his seminal theory of *dhvani* or "suggestion," to which we shall turn in a moment.

Anandavardhana's work is, however, a culmination and synthesis, not only of *alamkara* analysis, but of *rasa* theory as well. *Rasa* is usually translated as "sentiment." It is distinguished from *bhava* or "emotion," to which it is, nonetheless, closely related. Specifically, *bhava* is what we feel in ordinary life – love, sorrow, happiness, anger, etc. *Rasa*, in contrast, is what we feel in experiencing a work of art. It is akin to emotion, but not identical with it. (Hereafter, I shall use "emotion" rather than *bhava* as the concepts are pretty much identical; I shall, however, most often use *rasa* rather than "sentiment" as *rasa* is in this context a technical term and thus has no precise ordinary language equivalent – just as "gravity" or "quark" or "morpheme" has no

precise ordinary language equivalent.) Specifically, when I watch a romantic play, I do not actually love the hero or heroine (as I might love my spouse), but I do experience some sort of feeling. Moreover, this feeling is somehow related to love (in a way that it is not related to sorrow or anger, for example). Thus the Sanskrit theorists say that I am experiencing the "erotic *rasa*," not the emotion of love *per se*.

The earliest extant development of this theory is in the *Natyashastra* or Treatise on Dramaturgy attributed to Bharata-muni, but composed by a number of authors between the second century BCE and the sixth century CE. This seminal volume lists eight primary emotions and corresponding *rasas*: love/ the erotic, sorrow/the pathetic, and so on. (Lest this seem too restrictive, they acknowledge a wide range of ancillary feelings also.) Each literary work, in order to be aesthetically effective, was required to have one dominant *rasa*. This is not to say that other *rasas* could not enter: they not only could, but must. However, any additional *rasas* must function to further the dominant *rasa*. Suppose, e.g., that the dominant *rasa* of a work is the erotic. Then it makes perfect sense to bring in the pathetic *rasa*. The pathetic may be part of the erotic, just as sorrow may be part of love. (Indeed, another way of thinking about the relation between *rasa* and *bhava* is that the characters experience the *bhavas* [say, love and sorrow] while the readers/spectators experience the *rasas* [the erotic and the pathetic]). But the pathetic *rasa* in the work must operate to contribute to the erotic *rasa*. The same constraint holds if

the dominant *rasa* is the pathetic and the erotic is subsidiary. If the subsidiary *rasa* does not contribute to the dominant *rasa*, the experience of the reader/ spectator will push in different directions and the overall aesthetic experience will be weakened; it will not be a satisfactory experience of the erotic or of the pathetic.

Again, Anandavardhana combined the two strains of Sanskrit poetics developing them into a unified theory of aesthetic response, in part, based on the concept of *dhvani* or "suggestion." By the time of Anandavardhana, Sanskrit theorists of "figures of thought" had isolated several varieties of meaning, literal and metaphorical. At this level, the distinctions with which they were operating were roughly the same as those operative in Western poetics/ semantics today. They had concepts of literal meaning, idiomatic meaning, and various metaphorical and related meanings (encompassing simile and other figures); they had also isolated a number of ways in which non-literal meanings could be manifested and interpreted (e.g., through some explicit marker, such as the "like" and "as" in English similes). For example, "Varanasi is on the Ganges" does not literally mean that Varanasi is on the Ganges; it means (idiomatically) that Varanasi is on the bank of the Ganges; "Moon-faced beauty" does not literally mean that the woman's face was the moon, but that it was rounded and fair, and so on. In addition, Sanskrit theorists had isolated a variety of poetic and other implications (or, rather, non-logical "implicatures," to use Paul Grice's term), both literal and non-literal. E.g., a message sent by a

woman to her lover, "The lion, they tell me, does not prowl at the riverbank," would involve a complex metaphor/implicature to the effect that, if the woman and her lover meet at the riverbank, they will not be caught.

Anandavardhana distinguished a number of varieties of *dhvani*, covering these non-literal meanings. However, he maintained that there was one sort of meaning which was not part of this typology and which is most appropriately the referent of the term *dhvani*. This *dhvani* proper is not an idiom or metaphor (or metonymy, simile, etc.); nor is it an implicature (cf. Amaladass 92-93). Developing and systematising Anandavardhana somewhat, we may say that it is, rather, a non-paraphrasable "suggestion" of a word, phrase, sentence, topic, or (linguistically constructed) situation (see Amaladass 105). (Hereafter, I will use "text" as a term ambiguous between "word," "phrase," etc.) To say that the *dhvani* of a given text is non-paraphraseable is not to say that one cannot say anything about it (as Anandavardhana emphasises [671]). Quite the contrary. One can say many things about it. It is not unparaphraseable because of being ineffable. There are, rather, three reasons why *dhvani* is unparaphraseable. The first is that it is infinitely ramified. We can never enumerate all the suggestions, even all the relevant suggestions, of a given text (cf. *Lochana* 206.) This is not, however, a distinctive property of *dhvani*. For example, some metaphors are, roughly, paraphraseable in the sense that one can list all the relevant information conveyed by the metaphor

(especially for those metaphors which are close to idioms). But many metaphors are not fully paraphraseable in this sense. And at least for larger texts, even the relations between literal meanings are not fully paraphraseable.

The second reason that *dhvani* is not paraphraseable is more important and more distinctive. Indeed, it indicates that, in a sense, *dhvani* is not even partially paraphraseable. In the language of analytic philosophy, the *dhvani* of a text cannot be substituted for the text with a preservation of truth value (cf. *Lochana* 81). Indeed, *dhvani* is usually not statable in the form of a proposition which might have or not have a truth value. Consider a metaphor partially explicit in Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*: "Makak is a lion." As a metaphor, this means that Makak is brave, ferocious to his foes, etc. (For the purposes of the example, we can assume that it is not fully paraphraseable and thus that this list will not come to an end.) But note that each of these interpretations is substitutable for a lion, with a preservation of truth-value. "Makak is brave" and "Makak is ferocious to his foes" are just as true as "Makak is a lion." (I leave aside the issue of how to specify "metaphorical truth." Clearly, at least at a certain point in the play, this sentence is [ambiguously] true in a way that, say, "Makak is a gazelle" or "Makak is a unicorn" is not.) In contrast, consider the standard example of "a village on the Ganges." This phrase, the Sanskrit commentators emphasise, suggests holiness due to the holiness of the sacred river Ganges. However, there is no way in which the word "holiness" can be substituted for

the phrase or for part of the phrase. Moreover, there is no way that this suggestion can be turned into a proposition. E.g., the suggestion of holiness does not imply or implicate that the village itself is holy or that any of the villagers is holy. Returning to Walcott, we might say that the name "Makak" suggests a whole range of west-African mythological motifs concerning the divinity of the monkey, and at the same time a range of contrary European attitudes. Again, these are not substitutable for "Makak." Nor do they imply or implicate any propositions.

Even at this level, the notion of *dhvani* seems to be substantially different from anything in the Western tradition. For example, even though "connotations" are not conceived as truth-preserving, they are typically conceived of as involving some sort of assertion. Western theorists may well say that "a village on the Ganges" connotes "holiness" but I suspect that they would unreflectively conceive of this as part of a (perhaps ironic) assertion – that the village is or should be holy, that the villagers have a special duty to be holy, etc. For this reason, it would seem somewhat odd to say that a range of Yoruba beliefs are a "connotation" of the name "Makak," for, again, none of these beliefs is asserted (or denied) by this "connotation."

But this is not all that distinguishes *dhvani* from common Western notions – and this brings us to the final and perhaps most important reason why *dhvani* is not paraphraseable. Crucially, *dhvani* is not purely semantic: it is affective as well. Specifically, in the strictest sense, Anandavardhana tells us,

dhvani is *rasa-dhvani*, the *dhvani* of *rasa* – not the intellectual implication of some sentiment, but the "suggestion" of a *rasa* as an affective experience (see Abhinavagupta's comments on Anandavardhana, *Lochana* 70). In other words, *dhvani* is not paraphraseable, most importantly because it is not solely, or perhaps even primarily, a meaning; as *rasa-dhvani*, the "truest" form of *dhvani*, it is an experience – along the lines of what we would call "a moment of tenderness" or "a pang of sadness." It is, in short, an experience of *rasa*. A literary portrait of a village on the Ganges involves a full *rasa-dhvani* of holiness (or sacred peace) only if it gives us a feeling of that holiness (or sacred peace) along with the more narrowly semantic suggestion. Indeed, the feeling is all that is crucial. The name "Makak" communicates not only the idea of Yoruba beliefs, but a feeling as well, or a complex feeling: sadness (or the pathetic *rasa*) over their loss, anger (or the furious *rasa*) over their colonial denigration, etc.

In sum, aesthetic response is a matter of the experience of *rasas*. These *rasas* are evoked in a reader by words, sentences, topics, and the like, presented in a literary work, but not through their literal meanings, or even through their various secondary meanings, as such. Rather they are evoked through the clouds of non-denumerable, non-substitutable, non-propositional suggestions that surround these texts. Finally, it is important to add that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, they are evoked without our having any explicit awareness of suggested meaning. We do not, in other words, self-consciously infer some semantic

suggestion, then feel the *rasa*. Rather, we watch the play or read the poem without reflecting on either the meaning or associated feeling. Indeed, if we have to stop and reflect, we may not experience the *rasa*.

Abhinavagupta, Memory Traces, and Aesthetic Feeling

Abhinavagupta turned his attention away from the linguistic and related abstractions which had preoccupied even Anandavardhana, focussing his attention instead on the human mind, specifically the mind of the reader or viewer of a literary work. The first step in Abhinavagupta's project involved the at-least-tacit recognition that the theory of *rasa-dhvani* could not be understood as a theory of abstract linguistic structure. Rather, it only made sense as a theory of the way people respond to literature. In other words, *rasa-dhvani* had to be conceived in psychological terms.

Broadly speaking, Abhinavagupta was a transcendental realist whose philosophy involved a strong empiricist component. (A Hindu theologian himself, he was one of the harshest opponents of the Vedantist view that perceptual reality is illusion or *maya*; see, for example, Pandit 23.) His theory of mind was, consequently, realist (implicitly eschewing the "bifurcation thesis"). Predictably, it was broadly similar to other (Eastern and Western) theories of mind in isolating perception, memory, and other components or faculties. For our purposes, the most important part of Abhinavagupta's theory of mind is his theory of memory,

both storage and recollection. For Abhinavagupta, all experiences – perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and so on – leave "traces" in the mind (see *Aesthetic Experience* 79). Drawing out the implications of Abhinava's analysis, we may understand these traces as having two components: one representational, one emotive. The representational part may be perceptual (e.g., a visual image) or propositional (e.g., a certain fact). The emotive part is not the abstract recollection of one's having had an emotion – such a recollection would be propositional. It is, rather, a sort of re-experiencing of the emotion. It is not, in other words, remembering that one was sad or happy or frightened at a given time and place, but actually feeling again, in some degree, that sadness or happiness or fright. The point is most obvious with respect to strong emotions. For example, if one recalls a deceased friend or relative, one will have certain visual and other impressions, one will remember certain facts ("He had a passion for *samosas*;" "Her favourite authors were Shakespeare and Tagore"), and one will probably experience again, in a more or less attenuated form, the sense of loss, the sorrow that one felt at his/her death.

Now these traces, Abhinavagupta tells us, are usually latent in our minds. At times they are fully activated – that is, at times we recall these memories, re-experience the emotions and so on. This is all commonsensical enough. But, Abhinavagupta continues, there are also times when these traces are neither latent nor fully activated – and these are the most crucial. In other words, there are times when these traces are in some

sense activated, but are not brought into self-reflective consciousness. Or, more exactly, there are times when we are not self-reflectively aware of the representational content of the trace, and yet feel some hint of associated affect. This is, I think, common in our experience, though we may not immediately recognise the fact. I enter a building and am suddenly sad; I ask myself why and then recall an embarrassing or unpleasant event that occurred the last time I entered the building. Clearly, the memory had in some sense been activated (i.e., it was not fully latent) and clearly the associated affect had bled into my conscious experience (i.e., I felt sad), but the representational content of the memory was initially not conscious.

This sort of analysis is what allows Abhinavagupta to explain the phenomena isolated and described by Anandavardhana. Specifically, Abhinavagupta indicates that *rasa-dhvani* operates in the following manner. Through the semantic *dhvani* – which, again, is not explicitly brought to consciousness – the literary work activates traces in the mind of the reader (see *Lochana* 81), but does not bring them into consciousness. Again, these traces may be activated by words, phrases, topics and the like; thus stories of suffering will activate memories of suffering, stories of romantic love will activate memories of romantic love, and so on, both at a rather general level, and in various specific details (e.g., a wedding day, an estrangement and reconciliation), etc. Once these traces are activated, the associated emotions seep into consciousness (again, not as ideas,

but directly as feelings). The experience of the *rasa* of a literary work is precisely the experience of these feelings. More exactly, developing Abhinavagupta's ideas, we may say that all speech involves the activation of traces, the consequent seeping of affect, and so forth. However, most often, these traces are activated in a haphazard and non-cumulative manner, or else they are fully recalled. What makes aesthetic experience distinctive is that such activations are patterned; they are focussed on traces of a specific type, which is to say, traces that bear to one another a certain similarity in both representation and affect (e.g., in being memories of death and feelings of sorrow). While any given activation is likely to produce only very limited, perhaps imperceptible, experiences of affect, this sort of repeated, patterned activation should result in a more pronounced and continuous experience. As Abhinavagupta puts it, "the basic emotion is put to use in the process of relishing [a work of art]: through a succession of memory-elements it adds together a thought-trend which one has already experienced in one's own life" (*Lochana* 117; see also "the relishing of beauty arises in us from our memory bank of mental states which are suitable to the 'basic emotions' of the characters" [182]; and *Aesthetic Experience* 112).

Abhinavagupta extends this idea somewhat further when he argues that aesthetic pleasure results from the "generalisation" of emotion in *rasa*, which is to say, its removal from the self-interest that is part of the link between the affect and the representational content in memory

traces. In other words, when we fully remember a trace, the emotion which we experience is tied to self-interest (e.g., to our own personal loss of a loved one). However, through literature, we experience a version of the affect removed from its direct link with any particular (egocentric) representation in memory, and thus at least partially removed from self-interest (see *Aesthetic Experience* 86-87 and 96-97). In this way, *rasa* may be re-defined as emotion isolated from such self-interest and may even be compared, in Abhinavagupta's view, with the experience of religious enlightenment or *moksha* where such self-interest is entirely extinguished (see, for example, *Lochana* 226). (Note that, for Abhinavagupta, the dominant *rasa* of a successful work always resolves itself into *shanta rasa*, the *rasa* of peace, a temporary and partial version of the endless and perfect peace that accompanies *moksha*.)

To some extent, I have explicated and developed Abhinavagupta's ideas in a manner coherent with and partially derivative from contemporary cognitive science. However, I have not, I believe, fundamentally altered his claims or basic concepts. Again, it is my view that current theoretical and empirical work allows us to understand those claims and concepts – as claims and concepts of a nascent science – more thoroughly than could Abhinavagupta himself. However, I have refrained thus far from giving a full-blown, reductive account of Abhinavagupta's ideas within a broader theory of cognition. In the following section, I will attempt something along these lines by/through a translation of Abhinavagupta's theoretical premises

into one version of a theory of mind that I take to be plausible in light of recent research in cognitive science. As I have already indicated, cognitive science has little if anything to add to Anandavardhana's and Abhinavagupta's ideas about literary response. My concern, then, is merely to situate these ideas in a current theoretical framework, which is part of ongoing research programmes (to advert to Lakatos's valuable concept). After undertaking this translation, I will consider briefly the degree to which we may reasonably take the cognitive model of the mind to reflect real psychological structures.

Cognitive Science and *Rasa-dhvani*

Cognitive science comprises a set of related, but competing theories of the structure and operation of the human mind. Due to the nature of Abhinavagupta's hypotheses, I will be concentrating on the storage and accessing or recollection of representational knowledge (i.e., knowledge about something, including memories, as opposed to procedural knowledge, knowledge of how to do something). I will assume that all representational information is stored in and is accessible through a single long-term memory "unit." This unit includes a broad range of information that, in everyday life, we would be inclined to divide between a dictionary (meanings of words), an encyclopedia (general facts about things), and a biography or personal archive (propositional and perceptual memories of individual history). (This is a controversial assumption. However, the following

analyses could be rewritten – with some loss in elegance – in terms of three separate but closely interrelated units.) Following standard usage, I shall refer to this unit as the “lexicon.” However, I should note that this term should not be taken to imply a sort of unidirectional organisation and access: from dictionary/meaning through encyclopedia/belief to personal archive/memory. In fact, lexical “entries” (e.g., that for “monkey”) are structured in such a way as to allow access not only from words to memories, but from perceptions (e.g., seeing or hearing a monkey) to words, from memories to beliefs, and so on, indeed, just as there are words for which we have no beliefs or memories, and some for which we do not have even basic meanings (“I’ve heard that word before, what does it mean?”), there are also uncategorised perceptions and perceptual memories (“I’ve seen that before, what is it?”). Thus, it is no more a lexicon in our ordinary sense than it is a “mnemonicon” or an “aistheticon” (or an encyclopedia). Fortunately, however, these complications do not directly affect our concerns, which are with texts, and thus roughly fit the common sense model of organisation from “meanings” to beliefs and memories. Were we to extend this study to aesthetic response in, say, the visual arts, however, we would have to be more careful not to allow the prejudicial nature of the term to mislead us.

In the present context, then, we may think of the lexicon as structured into “lexical entries,” which is to say, meanings, perceptions, and so on, clustering around lexical items, such as “monkey,” “*dhvani*,” “chant,” “compose,”

“saffron,” etc. These entries are multiply cross-indexed, such that each entry is part of a number of sub-networks which allow access across entries. Thus, “monkey” is linked with “ape” and “chimpanzee” in one network (of related species), “Africa” and “India” in another network (of habitats), and so forth. These networks may themselves be categorised by some lexical item (e.g., “primate”), but they need not be – though, of course, one can always construct a category for a given network (e.g., “habitats of monkeys”) and, indeed, we use such *ad hoc* categories to access relevant lexical information.

As should already be clear, our mental lexicon – a structure that exists only in individual people’s minds and thus varies somewhat from person to person – is different from a dictionary or encyclopedia, not only in content, but in structure. Perhaps, most importantly, it does not have a single strict organising principle (e.g., alphabetical order). Rather, our mental lexicon can be re-ordered in a variety of ways to suit our accessing needs. For example, we may access words by first consonant (as in a dictionary, more or less) or by some other phonetic property, such as final syllable – if, say, we are writing an alliterative, rhymed poem. In most contexts, however, we are likely to access items by topic. One way of thinking about this is in terms of the sub-networks just mentioned. When discussing animals, we re-order our lexicon in such a way as to make, for example, “monkey” more directly or swiftly accessible than when discussing computer technology (see Garman 293). Indeed, this effect is probably

cumulative. If we are discussing Africa and animals, then "monkey" will be more accessible than if we are discussing animals alone. This "extra" accessibility of related terms, concepts and the like is interpreted, in the standard fashion, in terms of "priming." In this view, the introduction of one item "primes" cross-indexed items (e.g., "monkey" will prime the entries for "ape," "primate," and so on). At this level, priming can be understood as a re-ordering of the lexicon, such that the primed items are those which are placed highest in the order of a lexical search. For example, when we read or hear the syllable "mon" at the beginning of a word, we begin searching the lexicon for a "fit." When the topic is Wall Street, we will reach "money" first; when the topic is animals related to apes, we will reach "monkey" first. (In fact, the situation is somewhat more complicated than this, but the point is adequately valid for present purposes.)

On the other hand, "priming" has complex effects not only on access, but on other aspects of comprehension and response. In this way, it is not simply a matter of re-ordering the lexicon. There seems to be a change of status in the primed network. It is, in effect, brought out of long-term memory, though it is not accessed directly in consciousness. When speaking of "primates," I will have part of one lexical entry in consciousness (and parts of several lexical entries in "rehearsal memory," which may be understood as almost conscious or as circulating through consciousness). I also have a whole range of material stored in long-term memory (e.g., the meaning of "ambidextrous"

visual images of my first day at school, and a vast range of other currently irrelevant stuff). A network of primed lexical entries is clearly in a different mental state from either the conscious/rehearsal material or the material stored in long-term memory. Consider the following sentence: "Animals commonly associated with Africa would include lions, tigers, elephants, and apes." When I am directly conscious of the word "ape," the rest of the sentence is in rehearsal memory, and various irrelevant entries (e.g., "ambidextrous") are in long-term memory. The lexical entry for "monkey," however, is primed and is therefore in a state different from "apes" and "lions" on the one hand, and "ambidextrous," on the other. The primed entries are, we might say, placed temporarily in a sort of "buffer" between long-term memory and consciousness (or between long-term memory and rehearsal memory), a buffer which operates in part to allow access with minimal search.

This, I think, gives us a basis for rearticulating and reunderstanding Abhinavagupta's notion that traces may be activated while not being consciously recalled. Specifically, we may conceive of *dhvani* as lexical networks primed and stored temporarily in the memory buffer. Note that these networks may "decay" rapidly, which is to say, drop quickly out of the buffer if they are not repeatedly primed. (The rapid decay of priming effects is a well-documented phenomenon: see, for example, Garman 294.) However, when repeatedly primed, they would yield a pattern of unstated suggestions of precisely the sort we discussed above as defining *dhvani*.

To get a more detailed idea of how this might work, however, we need to consider not only the relations between lexical entries, but their internal structures as well. Here, as elsewhere, cognitive scientists are not unanimous in theories or even terminology. I will use the terms "schema," "prototype," and "exemplum" to define three types of sub-structure within a lexical item. By "schema," I mean a hierarchy of principles defining/explaining a lexical item. The hierarchy is based on "definitiveness" or "centrality" of the properties; the most central or definitive properties are at the top of the hierarchy, with increasingly peripheral properties listed in descending order. For example, being organic is more central to our conception of a human being than is having two arms – a person with one arm would count as a human being, but a statue with two arms would not. (This roughly recapitulates the distinction between the dictionary meaning and encyclopedic factual beliefs, but the distinction is one of degree, not of kind; some elements are "more definitive" than others, rather than one set of elements being "the definition" and another being "the empirical beliefs.") As virtually all cognitive scientists emphasise, this hierarchy involves a number of "default" options. These are properties or relations which we assume to hold unless we are told otherwise. Thus "human" includes "having two arms" unless we are given information about a birth defect or amputation. By "prototype," I mean a sort of concretisation of the schema with all default values in place, including those that are relatively unimportant in our

schematic hierarchy (cf. Johnson-Laird and Wason 342). Again, these vary somewhat from person to person, but probably all of us have a prototype of, say, "man" as having two arms, two legs, etc. My prototype, from what I can infer, has dark hair (i.e., neither bald nor grey-haired nor blond), is clean-shaven, and so forth. Our prototype of a bird is generally recognised to be roughly equivalent to a robin (thus rather different from an eagle, and more different still from a penguin). By "exemplum," I mean any specific instance of a category – for example, any man I know is an "exemplum" of man.

It is extremely important to note that all three sub-structures operate in cognition. We do not merely interpret or respond to the world and to other people in terms of abstract schemas. Indeed, we are more likely to understand and respond by reference to prototypes or particularly salient exempla (on the latter, see, for example, Ross and Nisbett, ch. 3). Indeed, this central cognitive role of exempla is crucial to literary response for a number of reasons. Most importantly, it appears to be the case that exempla – which are regularly primed and accessed along with schemas and prototypes – often have considerable affective force. Clearly, many such exempla (e.g., the memory of a close relative's death) cause one to feel strong emotion when one recollects them consciously.

This, then, gives us a way of translating and redeveloping Abhinava's notion that the affective component of memory traces is the source of *rasa*. Specifically, the *dhvani* of a text may now be understood as the schemas,

prototypes, and exempla primed or placed in a buffer between long term memory and rehearsal memory. The exempla include not only representational content, but affective force. When an exemplum is sustained in the buffer, its affective force should lead to precisely the sorts of effect hypothesised by Abhinavagupta when he explained *rasa* in terms of memory traces. Specifically, we have every reason to expect that the affective force of an exemplum would bleed into consciousness without our being aware of its associated representational content, which is to say, the perceptual or propositional aspect of the exemplum. Or, rather, we have every reason to expect this when a set of affectively and representationally related exempla (e.g., sorrowful exempla of love in separation) are maintained in the buffer through repeated priming due to the patterned *dhvani* of a text. (It is important that the exempla are related both affectively and representationally because the representation, so to speak, gives definition to the affect; for example, sorrow over death is not the same as sorrow over love in separation.)

Interestingly, there is some empirical research on literary response that would seem to support these hypotheses. Specifically, Uffe Seilman, Steen Larsen, Laszlo Halasz, Janos Laszlo, and others have conducted experiments designed to determine the degree to which literary and non-literary texts spontaneously elicit personal memories from readers (see Halasz, Larsen, Laszlo, and Seilman, and citations in both articles). This research is in some degree questionable on methodological grounds – primarily,

some obvious variables (e.g., subject matter) are inadequately controlled. In addition, the researchers appear to assume that aesthetic response is purely a function of the type of text being read and has little or nothing to do with the attitude or approach of the reader. Nonetheless, this research is broadly consistent with the present analysis, and provides at least some *prima facie* support.

The Nature of the Mind and the Claims of Theories

Having said all this, however, I should step back for a moment and say something about the precise nature of my claims. As mentioned at the outset, I am a realist in the sense of someone who believes that there is a fact of the matter about how the world is – and about how the mind is. However, I am not a realist in the sense of believing that the best theory available at any given moment is likely to be true or even likely to be talking about real things. Indeed, I do not even believe that the best theory should necessarily be confined to a discussion of entities that we can presume to be real. As Zenon Pylyshyn has indicated, every actual psychological theory is realist at some level; the only question is: at what level do we claim that our theoretical posits and principles represent real entities? Pylyshyn notes that our claims may range from the barest input/output realism to a full-blown realism extending all the way to details concerning posits, etc. (see Chomsky 236 and Pylyshyn 87-89). Consider linguistic theory. In the input/

output case, a theorist claims only that the theory will generate all and only grammatical sentences of a given language. He/she does not claim that the way the theory generates them is the same way in which they are produced by speakers; he/she does not claim that the rules of the theory have "psychological reality" in the minds of speakers of the language. In the "full-blown" case, in contrast, the theorist does claim that the rules of the theory and the rules in speakers' minds are identical – down to specific notational details. Very few theorists make either of these extreme claims, though some are closer to the input/output extreme, and others are closer to the full-blown extreme. I consider myself to fall pretty squarely in the middle.

Specifically, I believe that the mind should ultimately be understood as subjective/experiential (as I have argued at length in the first and second chapters of *On Interpretation*). Many theories impute to the mind a quasi-objectal character, most obviously when they posit mental items that are in principle inaccessible and thus in principle non-subjective (as is the case with Chomsky's underlying structures), but also when they speak of mind in terms of internal objects and forces. When theorists objectify the mind in this way, they base their theories on what I believe to be false premises. This is not to say that I think theorists should stop doing this. Daniel Dennett has pointed out that, when faced with extremely complex material phenomena, we frequently adopt an "intentional stance" toward the phenomena, attributing an intention in order to allow ourselves to think

productively about the object or situation (236-39). Inverting Dennett, I do not see any reason that we could not adopt an "objectal stance" toward subjectivity in order to construct models by which we may better understand this highly complex phenomenon.

On the other hand, the model – whether intentional or objectal – should in my view seek to preserve the broad structural relations of the original phenomena. It is this structural correlation that I would claim for the model of mind presented above. In other words, I would not claim that there is a lexicon *per se*, a buffer, etc. However, I would say that there is a subjective distinction that preserves the structural relations that define and distinguish these entities. Put simply, our subjectivity could be such that we have one thing under consideration and, after that, all our memories are equal. If this were so, then our subjectivity would not preserve the structural relations that distinguish long-term memory and the buffer. My contention, then, is that there are such structural correlates – and that the theories of Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta can be revised and developed in terms of these structures in such a way as to provide a fruitful and plausible account of aesthetic experience which can be part of an ongoing research programme.

In any event, however we decide ultimately to construe theories of the mental lexicon, I hope that the preceding discussion of Sanskrit poetics and cognitive science has demonstrated the value of the former and its remarkable congruence with the latter. More importantly, I hope that the

explication, synthesis, and extension of these ideas has led to a more adequate understanding of literary response and that the resulting theory might

productively be incorporated into the empirical research programmes now flourishing in the discipline of cognitive science.

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Remembrance and Recognition: Plato, Abhinavagupta and Proust

Dusan Pajin

IT IS AGREED THAT myth is a solidified memory of (metaphorical) occurrences and situations that existed in *illo tempore* (primordial time). Myth-telling and, later, recital and drama, help man to recollect and remember these occurrences, and also to recognise the same patterns repeating themselves in his life, now in actual time. This is a process of double recognition: in myth and drama he recognises the pattern of happenings from his own life, or those of other people, and in his life, or in other people's, he recognises the patterns exemplified in myth or drama.

✓ 1

With Plato's theory of *anamnesis* (remembrance, recollection) we leave behind aesthetics to approach epistemology and part with poetry and drama to work with philosophy. Remembering here means keeping in memory what has been told and retold in tradition. With Plato, remembrance and recollection refer to a special faculty and proto-history of the soul, "recollection of the things" (i.e., ideas) "formerly seen by our soul when it travelled in the divine company" (*Phaedrus* 249b). This means that the soul (*psyche*) has seen and known something before birth, but has forgotten this knowledge after birth. But why, we need to ask.

There are two reasons: one prenatal and the other postnatal. In *The Republic* Plato explains in the myth of Er that before souls are reborn (incarnated) each has to drink from Lethe, the River of Forgetfulness, and as they drink, they forget everything they have

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seen and known in the world beyond (620).¹

New, or postnatal, oblivion or forgetfulness is added to this after birth.

Because every pleasure and pain has a sort of rivet with which it fastens the soul to the body and pins it down and makes it corporeal, accepting as true whatever the body certifies. (*Phaedo* 83)

However, under the guidance of philosophy, and with help from it, the willing soul can remember its knowledge (*noesis, episteme*), and recognise its true identity and independence from the body. The main point is that this knowledge is actually nothing new for the soul: it is potentially there, all the time, but obscured by ignorance, which is oblivion. The same holds for the independence and identity of the soul. The soul is pure and free from becoming and decay. But, when clouded by emotion, it accepts "as true whatever the body certifies," and is, thence, excluded from the

"fellowship with the pure and uniform and divine." The main task of philosophy is, therefore, not to impart some new knowledge, really unfamiliar to the soul, but to help it to remember. Ignorance is oblivion, knowledge is recollection, "learning is just recollection (*anamnesis*)." (ibid 72-76)

Without help, the "pregnancy" of the soul with this memory is only a

potential, because, under oblivion, the soul is the willing prisoner of the body.

Every seeker after wisdom knows that up to the time when philosophy takes it over, his soul is a helpless prisoner ... and wallowing in utter ignorance. And philosophy can see that the imprisonment is ingeniously effected by the prisoner's own active desire, which makes him first accessory to his own confinement. (ibid 82)

The possibility of liberation from this confinement rests upon three factors. The first is *anamnesis*, the other is philosophy, or guidance by a philosopher, and the third, sensible objects. The third factor is extremely important because in the dualism of his idealism, Plato ascribes a double role to the world of the senses. On the one hand, it deludes the soul, keeping it in ignorance and bondage, acting as a source of pain and pleasure to the body, while on the other it helps in recovering knowledge.

We acquired our knowledge before our birth, and lost it at the moment of birth, but afterwards, by the exercise of our senses upon sensible objects, recover the knowledge which we had once before. (ibid 75)

However, only few people retain an adequate remembrance of this, and

when they behold here any image of that other world, are rapt in amazement, but they are ignorant of what this rapture means, because

¹ This differs from the later interpretation by Vergilius (Aeneis), who says that souls forget the suffering borne in former lives, and are willing to live again under the sky (i.e. to be reborn).

they do not clearly perceive. For there is no radiance in our earthly copies of justice or temperance or those other things which are precious to souls.... But of beauty, I repeat that we saw her there shining in company with the celestial forms: and coming to earth we find her here too, shining in clearness through the clearest aperture of sense. (*Phaedrus* 250)

So, the easiest and most accessible way to *anamnesis* is by way of sight and love for beauty. Even as he thus specially credits beauty, Plato is not willing to single out art as a primary source in remembering the idea of beauty. In *Symposium*, Diotima explains that the ascending course to beauty starts with the perception of beauty in forms, rather than in souls and deeds, institutions and sciences.

He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love ... when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty ... a nature which in the first place is everlasting, knowing no birth or death, growth or decay. (*Symposium* 210-11)

For Plato, aesthetic experience is, therefore, not exclusively related to art. Beauty is first perceived (*aisthesis*) by the sense of sight and only later by *noesis*. Love (*eros*), on the other hand, is not exclusively an emotional relation between the sexes (or between man and man, in homosexuality), but an instinct or drive that leads to the recollection of the idea of beauty through cultivation and contemplation.

2

These rich metaphors and images would serve as inspiration for Platonism and Gnosticism. Being born, man "falls" or is "thrown" into the world of the body. The soul forgets her original habitation and identity. She is overwhelmed with desires and worldly cares, becoming more deeply engaged and involved in the here and now. Gnosticism speaks of "sleep," "drunkenness" and "oblivion." Man is dispersed and divided by cravings and cares. He is engulfed by the noise of the world, by its fears, hopes and disappointments. This is "the world of darkness, utterly full of evil ... full of falsehood and deceit ... A world of turbulence without steadfastness ... a world in which the good things perish and plans come to naught" (qtd. in Jonas 57). In Gnostic dualism, the opposition between "this world" and "the other world" is greater than in the philosophy of Plato. The duality of light and darkness, of good and evil, corresponding to the duality of the two worlds, is greater than the Platonic duality of ideas and "shadows," since darkness is the essence and power of *kosmos*. One can find no mediation and resemblance between the ideas and the "shadows."

Even the light in this world is really darkness, "black light" (Jonas 58). In such a world there is no beauty; if there is, it is not there to remind man of the idea of beauty, but to keep him in oblivion and ignorance, to reveal its ugliness in the end. In order to regain and remember knowledge, *gnosis*, man needs help and a "call from without."

The call is uttered by one who has been sent into the world for this purpose and in whose person the transcendent Life once more takes upon itself the stranger's fate: he is the messenger or Envoy – in relation to the world, the Alien Man. (Jonas 75-76)

In Christian Gnosticism, this redeemer was identified as Jesus Christ.

Gnosis is insight, immediate vision of truth. The man who has *gnosis* knows whence he comes from and where he is headed; he can remember his true identity and understand his present condition. Jonas summarises the contents of the call (or *gnosis*) as follows:

the *reminder* of the heavenly origin and the transcendent history of man; the *promise* of redemption ... and finally the practical *instruction* as to how to live henceforth in the world. (ibid 81)

This call has to help man, or initiate his self-recognition as (or through) remembrance. This knowledge (*gnosis*) is effective in that it is sufficient for salvation and the ascent of the self (*pneuma*) back to its origin (Divine light).

To be reminded means to be reawakened to the knowledge of oneself, to regain, through remembering, the forgotten knowledge of one's true identity, to recognise that man in the world is not at home, because he is not of this world. He is an alien, a stranger, unprotected, who does not understand the ways of the world, and the world does not understand him either.

The stranger who does not know the ways of the foreign land wanders about lost; if he learns its ways too well ... the distress has gone, but this very fact is the culmination of the stranger's tragedy. The recollection of his own alienness, the recognition of his place of exile for what it is, is the first step back; the awakened homesickness is the beginning of the return. (ibid 49-50)

For Gnosticism, suffering in the world is not expiation for sins but a reminder² that man has been thrown to the world as a thrust toward recognising his self (*pneuma*) and his otherworldly origin.

Among modern writers, Marcel Proust believed that man is either reincarnated or that he is otherworldly. He felt that the obligations of moral life, or our strivings toward perfection, are hard to explain if we take into account only this one life. In *La Prisonnière*, in contemplation after the death of Bergotte, he says that it seems as if we enter life under a burden of obligations already fixed in some previous life. There is no reason why, he says, we should be kind and good-hearted, and there is no reason for the artist to be obliged to start or polish his work for the twentieth time, since, once he is dead, the admiration his work would arouse would mean nothing to his dead body. All these obligations, he adds, are not sanctioned in this life, and seem to belong to a different order, to some other world, completely different from this

² Therefore, Gnosticism could explain the suffering of the innocent and the good life of the vile. If Dosztoevsky were a Gnostic and not an Orthodox Christian, he would have found an answer for his question: why does the innocent child suffer?

one. And we have these laws in ourselves without knowing how our being came to be inspired with them (Proust 1: 246).

However, in Gnosticism we find extreme dualism. There are not only two worlds, but two gods and two selves, as well. One God is the creator God, responsible for this world, and the other is God the unknown, yet to be recovered at the end of time. One self is the self of the world (*psyche*), the other self (*pneuma*) is not from here, not of this world. The transcendence of the other world and the unknown God do not stand in any (positive) relation to the sensible world, and the pneumatic self has no relation to the psychic self. Therefore, Jonas called this teaching "acosmism," the main values being beyond cosmic origin and significance. Every culture must confront itself with the principal relation of man with the world, and the relation of past, present and future in individual existence and in cosmo-historical time. These are basic questions which also determine the possible answer to the questions: what is the meaning of life, and how is man supposed to use his time and the power available to him in this life? Gnosticism proudly announces, in the words of Clement of Alexandria,

the knowledge of who we are, what we become, where we were, where into we have been thrown, where to we hurry, where from we are redeemed, what birth is, and what rebirth. (*Excerpta ex Theodoto* 78.2 in Jonas 334)

3

Thrownness, forlornness and homelessness are subjects in Existentialism, especially in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.³ The themes of the alien, the stranger and the emigrant can also be found in the writings of twentieth-century authors like Camus (*The Stranger*) and Milos Crnjanski (*Migrations, The Novel on London*). The best description of the world (as if) made and governed by the bad god *Demiourgos* can be found in the novels of Kafka, as well as those by dissident writers from Eastern Europe, like Solzhenyitsin, Shalamov, Kundera. Here man is thrown into a *kosmos* of social and political relations (state, *polis*) while in Gnosticism, he is thrown into a *kosmos* as nature (*physis*). But both are governed solely by power.

In Gnosticism, however, there is still *gnosis*, the other world, and the assumption that man can save himself and return to real, eternal light and life. In modern literature there is no call (save to the trial or prison), no open doors, no meaning, no promise, no faith, no knowledge, only absolute contingency.

This makes modern nihilism infinitely more radical and more desperate than gnostic nihilism could ever be.... That only man cares, in his finitude facing nothing but death, alone with his contingency and the objective meaninglessness of his projected meanings, is a truly unprecedented situation (Jonas 339).

³ Jonas (320-40) makes an extensive comparative analysis of Gnosticism, Existentialism and Nihilism in the concluding section of his book, while Tanbes (155-72) has written a comparative study of Gnosticism and Heidegger's notions about it from *Sein und Zeit*.

Here, there is neither Gnostic knowledge (*gnosis*) nor Christian faith (*pistis*), neither the possibility of ascent,⁴ nor of salvation; only will to power and class struggle.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche says that only art can overcome the terror and absurdity of life; only with the help of art can man endure the absurdity of existence; life and the world are justifiable only as aesthetic phenomena. Proust would agree too. For them, art and aesthetic experience were as important as gnosis was for Gnosticism.

To be saved by or through art was a life credo for some modern artists. Since aesthetic values do not need any transcendental support, it seemed that art could survive the downfall of the "intelligible world" of philosophy and the "death of the God" of religion.⁵

Art does not call upon knowledge or faith – aesthetic wonder was sufficient. Its message was valid even when philosophy and religion were corrupted. Even when man lost faith in ideas and gods, he could still wonder. Immersion in a work of art, standing in a meadow full of flowers, meeting someone, or being in love, could, perhaps, be sufficient reason to live (even if one has come to be without hope, faith, or meaning).

Bhatta Nayaka, the Indian aesthetician, says:

I pay my homage to Shiva the omniscient poet, who created all the three worlds, and thanks to whom people are able to attain aesthetic bliss by watching the spectacle of the play that is our life in this world.

In Trika Shaivism, we find an original contribution in the "aesthetic way," a possibility of attaining liberation not only through purification and perfection in ethical, noetic, ascetic or devotional values, but through aesthetic contemplation: in peace (*shanta rasa*) and wonder (*chamatkara*). However, this was not the result of nihilism, of a downfall of religious or philosophical order, but a contribution despite them; it was introduced out of plenty, not because of want. With Proust we see that art and aesthetic experience were a last refuge in the wasteland; for Abhinavagupta and his predecessors it was a matter of choice. For Gauguin and Van Gogh, art was the last resort, something to hang on to after everything else had failed.

Abhinavagupta often quotes the *Vijnanabhairava*, a work that can be considered one of the best expositions of the aesthetic (or should we say "ecstatic") way of Trika Shaivism. In the *Vijnanabhairava*, there is no principal

⁴ Metaphors of ascent have been changing: for Plato, it was the "wings of the soul;" in Gnosticism, it was ascent through the spheres of the seven planets; with John Climacus, climbing the ladder. Now ascent only means becoming rich or powerful, or having a successful career.

⁵ Even if art cannot survive, we can be sure that soap operas will. If soap operas had existed in the time of the *Puranas*, Indians would have known them to be the only thing to survive between the *kalpas*. Even Hegel could not predict the coming to being of such a vital, seemingly all-surviving form. While the Hegelian system posits the death of Art, it is the opposite that is true: the Idea is dead, long live Art.

difference between the aesthetic experience related with works of art and the experience of relish, joy, or the feeling of expansiveness in front of a beautiful landscape. This is the same continuum of the "aesthetic way" we have already found in Plato's gradual ascension to the idea of beauty, through contemplation of beauty in art and other domains, including erotics. The same principle is present in the Chinese and Japanese "aesthetic ways," exemplified in the tea ceremony,⁶ in the cult of plum and cherry blossoms (contemplation in front of the tree, or contemplation of a picture, with a poem on the margin), or in garden contemplation, of a garden that is "not real," but abstract (at times even without flora), and is therefore a work of art and, at the same time, an object of *natura naturata*.

In India, this principle was extended to the performing arts as well. Cosmic play (*lila*) in the Kashmir tradition includes the drama of life and drama as a stage performance; therefore, aesthetic bliss is possible while watching the play of life as well as a play on stage.⁷

However, to look upon life as (a part of cosmic) play is possible for most

people only after meditative training. It is easier to obtain this experience through poetry or drama. Abhinava and other aestheticians from Kashmir explain this factor – in modern parlance known as aesthetic distance – in a similar way: by the generality (*sadharanya*) of the presentation in art. This presentation creates beyond the space of personal interest and concern, and at the same time gives the recipient an opportunity to remember his personal experiences and moods, to recognise them in events of drama, and to identify with the main personalities.

Generality is thus a state of self-identification with the imagined situation, devoid of any practical interest ... of any relation whatsoever with the limited self, and as it were, impersonal.

(Gnoli xxii)

The aesthetic experience is, therefore, an invitation to the recognition (*pratyabhijna*) of the higher, impersonal self (*atman*), pointing towards the same goal as meditative experience,⁸ which can also be realised in an aesthetic setting beyond art.

⁶ The tea ceremony is a sophisticated aestheticisation of an ordinary event, blending the ordinary (preparing and drinking tea) and the non-ordinary (highly stylised manners and conversation), an integration of life with ritual, slowing down and becoming attentive to details, leaving aside the hustle, cares and anxieties of everyday life in order to open the mind and heart to the mystery of the eternal now, and to the ineffable meaning that "lies beneath the surface" (*yugen*). For further analysis of *yugen*, especially related with the rock garden of Ryōanji, see Deutsch (24-35).

⁷ However, this does not mean that the autonomy of art is obscured. "Abhinava likes to insist on the autonomy of a work of art, on the fact that it is *sui generis* and need have no object corresponding to it in the real world" (Masson and Patwardhan 51).

⁸ Masson and Patwardhan state that Bhatta Nayaka was perhaps "the first person to make the famous comparison of yogic ecstasy and aesthetic experience" (21). He comments on the opening verse of the *Natyashastra* (a classic on art of drama, c. sixth century CE), and states that drama should help people understand the insubstantiality of worldly objects.

5

However, this happens under certain conditions, which also explains why people, generally, do not attain liberation during or after aesthetic experiences. Plato said that the aesthetic experience governed by *eros* should lead gradually to the recognition of the idea of beauty. To this, Gnoli (xlvi) adds citations from the *Theologia Platonica* of Proclus, which/who compares the wonder⁹ that appears in aesthetic and mystic experience with the astonishment of the soul in front of the beautiful and the sacred. The cessation of the ordinary world, of the limitations of everyday experience and practically-oriented functional consciousness is perceived with wonder and amazement. It is not possible to know the cause from the effect – the non-ordinary or non-worldly (*alaukika*) and wonder (*chamatkara*) are in a synchronic relation. Without wonder, everything is just worldly (*laukika*). Ordinarily, we cannot recognise the non-ordinary without wonder. According to Abhinavagupta, *chamatkara* is consciousness without obstacles (*vighna*). It is the consciousness of a subject “who is immersed in the vibration (*spanda*) of a marvellous enjoyment (*adbhuta-bhoga*),” says the *Abhinavabharati* (60). This consciousness cannot be intentional and it is the result of tuning in to, or being in resonance with, a certain vibration. This is possible for the *sabridaya* (“one with a heart”), who is sensible and possesses the consent of his own heart. These traits are also found in Proust’s blissful moments

(“*moments bienheureux*”): bliss and wonder, cessation of obstacles, non-intentionality and the tuning of the personality to the ecstatic, extemporal vibration. For Proust, these blissful moments were not related (for the most part) to works of art, but to the superposing of remembered and actual impressions. Of the eleven principal moments listed by Shattuck (70-74), only one relates to works of art (the septet by Vinteuil). This puts them on par with the *dharaṇas* from *Vijñanabhairava* (VBh). For example, with *dharaṇa* 49 we are reminded of the first blissful moment in Proust’s *madeleine* sequence (Proust 1: 34-36) related to the taste of tea and cake and exquisite pleasure:

When one experiences the
expansion of joy of savor arising
from the pleasure of eating and
drinking, one should meditate on
the perfect condition of this joy;
then there will be supreme delight.
(VBh verse 72)

For Proust, blissful moments are generally a blending of past and present. However, there is one exception – the moment to do with “the steeples of Martinville” (Proust 1: 138-40) does not include any memory. The sequence begins with the enigmatic “call” from various impressions to decipher the meaning of happiness related to them. While riding to Martinville, on one of the turns in the road, the two steeples appear to glow in the sunset. Full of joy, Marcel feels that this glow seems to contain and to conceal some meaning.

⁹ The notion of wonder (*ekplekseos*) in the writings of Plato and Proclus seems to be different from the wonder (*thauma*) that for Aristotle is the beginning of philosophy (*Metaphysic* 982b).

This reminds us of *dharana* 51:

Wherever the mind of the individual finds satisfaction, let it be concentrated on that. In every such case the true nature of the highest bliss will manifest itself.

(VBh verse 74)

However, though the prevalent pattern of Proust's blissful moments is the superposing of past and present, the *dharanas* mostly relate to the present. But the difference is superficial – the means are different, but the goal is the same: to synchronise with pure time (the eternal now, the paradox of time without transience), and recognise one's extemporal being. In *Time Regained*, Proust says that he could not contemplate solely on actual experience, since he could not apply his imagination – his only faculty for enjoying beauty – to actual situation. In order to apply imagination he needed the superposing

of the present with past experience. Thus, by connecting past experience (remembered and imagined) with the present, he could immobilise and isolate pure time, and recognise this being (*cet être*) that feeds upon the “essence of things.”

Blissful moments are based on non-intentional, involuntary remembering,¹⁰ while voluntary remembering is governed by some (practical) aim.¹¹ Blissful moments and *chamatkara* have in common that they overcome both time and obstacles. This brings bliss.

“The so-called supreme bliss, the *lysis*, the wonder, is therefore nothing but tasting ... of our own liberty,” says Abhinavagupta. (ABh, qtd. in Gnoli xlv)

Through lengthy volumes Marcel is repeatedly challenged to solve the enigma of happiness with respect to these blissful moments. In the last

¹⁰ It is strange that Shattuck, who makes a careful analysis of these moments, underestimates the importance of involuntary remembering in blissful moments. He summarises their pattern as follows (69-75). First, “Marcel is always in a dispirited state of mind; bored, even tired at the time of their occurrence.” Second, “he experiences a physical sensation, which comes unexpectedly.” Third, “the sensation is accompanied by a clear feeling of pleasure and happiness which far surpasses anything explained by the sensation alone.” Fourth, all these “lift Marcel steeply out of the present,” and the past event is “remembered, recognized and assimilated into the same binocular field of vision with the present event.” Fifth, “the first three components reach out to form a link not only with the past but also with an event or development in the future.” The sixth element is a variable response to the experience that follows it. Shattuck mentions the distinction between involuntary memory and conscious recognition, but in a different sense (40). He puts this involuntary memory of the blissful moments in opposition to the conscious recognition of Marcel's vocation as a writer, and his task of writing. This recognition is, for Shattuck, not the recognition of the extemporal self (which makes death indifferent), but recognition of the vocation and task awaiting him (in the time left) before death.

¹¹ Free association in psychoanalysis combines involuntary remembering with a practical aim. The patient has to remember some past experiences (emotional conflicts) in order to recognise their conversion into present symptoms; this frees him from past conflicts and from present repetition of symptoms. The same pattern can be found in Indian meditative traditions. One has to remember previous lives in order to recognise the relationship between those unresolved tendencies and the present life. With that, he is liberated from *karma* and the necessity of further incarnations.

volume (*Time Regained*) he understands that these moments are blissful because he is free from the anxiety and doubts about his future (will he be a writer? is he "losing" time?). He gains time that is free from transience, and certainty, which makes him indifferent to death. Finally, he recognises in himself this being (*cet être*) that belongs to the extempore order, the common source of the past and the present. That being is also beyond anxiety about the future, represented by transience and death. Besides wonder, recognition of this other self is the second precondition for attaining liberation through aesthetic experience.

6

Colpe compares Proust's idea of liberation from time with the Gnostic notion of immortality, and the recognition of the everyday self and the extemporal "this being" (*cet être*) with the recognition of the psychic and the pneumatic self in Gnosticism (40-41). However, Proust has a greater affinity for this world than any Gnostic. He accepts as genuine its call to confront the mystery of beauty and destruction, love and pain, wonder and despair, being and death. For him, these are not distractions, or a negative hint for a "call from without." Mostly, the call to solve

the enigma is received from the beauty of the world: the steeples of Martinville, the three trees in Hudimesnil, the azure sky of Venice, or the sound of a spoon striking against the plate. But how should we understand the concluding part of *Time Regained*, the *matinée* at Guermites which follows the last blissful moment? After a long intermission, Marcel meets his aged friends, and recognises them only after considerable effort, realising the destructiveness of time. Beckett (57) and Shattuck (38, 111) consider this as proof that the blissful moments have failed, that death is not indifferent "because it sets limits to one's human capacity to create," that time was not regained or recovered, but only obliterated (for a while), and now strikes back with the load of years, and the powder that covers the hair and the faces of his acquaintances. Confronted with this dance macabre, Beckett and Shattuck give up on the meaning and the importance of the blissful moments, and are willing to surrender to oblivion (*oubli*) the hardly-won recognition (*reconnaissance*) of the extemporal self (*cet être*). Perhaps Abhinavagupta would have understood this better. For him, the essential nature of the self (*atman*) is hidden owing to our innate forgetfulness (*moha*). The purpose of *pratyabhijna*¹² (recognition, *reconnaissance*) is to remove

¹² A separate school in Kashmir Shaivism developed around the notion of Pratyabhijna (recognition, self-awareness). Kaw considers Somananda (ninth century) to be a founder of the Pratyabhijna school (with his *Shiva-drishhti*), his disciple Utpaladeva as a systematiser (with *Pratyabhijna-shastra*), and Abhinavagupta (tenth/eleventh century), a disciple of Utpaladeva's disciple, as the expounder and commentator of the ideas and works of this system (with two commentaries on *Ishvara-pratyabhijna*, the second chapter of *Tantraloka*, etc.) (Kaw 49).

the *atman*'s forgetfulness.¹³ In *Ishvara-pratyabhijna-vimarshini* he says that recognition (*pratyabhijna*) is the unification of two experiences: remembrance (*smarana*) and perception (*anubhava*) (qtd. in Kaw 145). For Abhinavagupta and Proust the power of remembrance (*smarana-shakti*) supports the view that the *atman* (*cet être*) is permanent and extemporal. Plato, Gnosticism, Abhinavagupta and Proust all agree on one basic count: that forgetfulness is inborn and due also to its relation with the body, to cares, the anxieties, and the hustle of life. For

Plato, remembrance and recognition enable us to regain the perceptions from the world of ideas, while, for the Gnostics, they help acknowledge otherworldliness. Did Proust understand the "dolorous synthesis of survival and annihilation," or did his bliss fail him at the end? Perhaps he would have found the following lines familiar: "In this way, if the aspirant imagines that the entire world is being burnt by the fire of *Kalagni* and does not allow his mind to wander away to anything else, then in such a person the highest state of man appears" (VBh, verse 53).

¹³ *Atman* in the Pratyabhijna school differs slightly from *atman* as understood in Vedanta. In Pratyabhijna, *atman* is a synonym for Maheshvara (Great Lord, ultimate reality) and an individual self, while in Vedanta, *atman* is an individual self-identical with *brahman*. In Vedanta, ignorance (*avidya*) is twofold: a confusion of the self (*atman*) with empirical existence (*anatman*) and, therefore, the ignorance of the ultimate identity of *atman* and *brahman*. *Moksha* (liberation) is attained through insight or knowledge (*vidya*, *jnana*). In Pratyabhijna, *moha* (oblivion, delusion) and *anavamala* (ignorance) conceal the real nature of the self and its power of knowledge and action. The recognition (*pratyabhijna*) of the real nature of the self and its identity with Maheshvara makes one aware of the faculties ordinarily hidden and is actually *moksha* (liberation).

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Abhinavagupta's Contribution to the Solution of Some Problems in Indian Musicology

Jaideva Singh

ABHINAVAGUPTA'S COMMENTARY ON THE *Natyashastra* (NS), the *Abhinavabharati* (ABh), is not simply a gloss that interprets important words, but a detailed discussion of important issues in musicology, replete with brilliant suggestions that both re-orient the way we see certain concepts in music and lead to the solution of other difficult problems.

If all of Abhinavagupta's suggestions were collected, they would make an entire book by themselves. In a short paper like this, therefore, it will not be possible to take up all the points that he raises. I discuss here only a few of his observations, which, in my opinion, make a definite contribution to musicology.

1. Abhinava's Explanation of Svara

Let us first of all take up Abhinavagupta's views on *svara*, or the musical note. After discussing the ideas of some of his predecessors with regard to this question, he concludes: *vayaṃ tu śruti-sth-anābhighāta-prabhava-śabda-prabhāvito'nurāṇanātmā snigdha-madhuraḥ śabda eva svara iti vakṣyāmaḥ* (NS 4: 11). In this statement, he makes two points. First, like Matanga, he suggests that there are two kinds of *śruti*: *svara-śruti* and *antar-śruti*. It is only at the position of the *svara-śruti* that sound explodes into *svara*, not at the intervening *antar-śrutis*. This is clearly stated in the following words:

śruti-sthānābhighāta-prabhava-śabda-prabhāvitaḥ

That which is *prabhāvita*, i.e., made, become, or transformed by *śabda* or sound, which is produced (*prabhava*) by being struck at the position of its appropriate *śruti* (*śruti-sthāna-bhighata*).

Jaideva Singh (1893-1986) was a great scholar in musicology, philosophy and Sanskrit, and a leading expert on Kashmir Shaivism. He has to his credit several books in Hindi and English, including translations of the seminal texts of Kashmir Shaivism, including the Shiva-sutra, the Spanda-karika, the Pratybhijnahridayam and the Vijñanabhairava. He was awarded Padma Bhushan by the Government of India in 1974.

The second point he makes is that when the sound is produced at its appropriate *shruti* it becomes *anurananatma snigdha-madburah śabdaḥ*: "a resonant sweet sound affecting the ear agreeably." And this is *svara* or a musical note.

Western musicologists have defined the musical note from the point of view of the physical aspect of sound, in terms of a regular, definite number of vibrations per second. Abhinavagupta defines it from the aesthetic point of view, that is, from the point of view of its effect upon the mind of the listener.

There are two important words in his definition of *svara*: *anurananatma* and *snigdha-madburah*. *Anuranana* denotes the physical aspect of the note, and *snigdha-madburah* its aesthetic aspect. *Anuranana* is not simply echo, but is that which sounds like a continuous tinkling echo. *Snigdha-madburah* is the agreeable sweet sensation it produces in the listener. All later writers on music have abided by this definition of Abhinavagupta's. Sarangadeva repeats these very words in his *Sangita-ratnakara*. But this is not all.

Abhinavagupta's suggestions in this regard have been original and unique, and are not in any way derivative from the work of any other musicologist.

The word *svara* is derived from two roots: *svr* of *bhuvādi-gaṇa* (*śabdopatāpayoh*, i.e. *śabda* or sound and *upatapa* or warmth of feeling) and *svara* of *curādi-gaṇa* (*ākṣepe*, i.e. hinting at or imposing). Abhinavagupta says that the word *svara* as used in music connotes both these senses. The reading, as it occurs in the current extant version of the

Natyashastra, is corrupt. After correction, it stands thus:

*svr śabdopatāpayoh, svara ākṣepa ity-anayoḥ svara śabdaḥ, tena śabda-svabhāvām vitta-vṛtti-madhyā-sṭhātārūpa-svāsthyāvasthā-parityājanenopatāpayanto
br̥dyatātīśaya-vaśāt svatām
ākṣipāntaḥ sva-viśaye abhidhānam
kurvantaḥ svara ity-uktāḥ.*

(NS 4: 10-11)

The mind in its natural state tends towards plain sound. A musical note or *svara* has the power to obtrude itself on the mind, to set aside this natural tendency towards mere sound, and by its excess of pleasantness, makes the mind susceptible to emotion and by thus imposing itself on it, makes its presence felt. This is not literary *tour de force* on Abhinavagupta's part. Instead, he is drawing our attention to a patent psychic state aroused by a musical note, and in this lies his originality.

2. The Principle of *Nishkasa* or Elimination in the Scheme of the *Shrutis*

Abhinavagupta draws our attention to the principle of *nishkasa* in the scheme of the *shrutis* (NS 14). He uses the expression *nishkasa prakrama*, a gradual, systematic elimination of one note in the *shrutis* for the delineation of *svaras*.

Shadja is made of four *shrutis*, *rishabha* of three and *gandhara* of two. *Madhyama* occupies the central position and divides the *saptaka* or heptad into two equal parts. The other three notes – *panchama*, *dhaivata* and *nishada* – have

the same number of *shrutis*, i.e., four, three and two, with the gradual elimination of one *shruti* in each case.

In this regard, Abhinavagupta also draws our attention to the fact that, truly speaking, there are only three notes. As he puts it, *tena paramārthataḥ trayaḥ svarāḥ* (NS 4: 14): "The *svaras* are really three," – *sa*, *re*, *ga*; *pa*, *dha*, *ni* are the same *svaras*, at a higher level of utterance. The difference is only due to the *urdhva sparsha* and the *mandra sparsha*.

3. Correspondence of the Vedic and the *Laukika Svaras*

Owing to a misinterpretation of the *shiksha granthas*, the pedagogical texts, many musicologists assumed that the *shadja*, the *madhyama*, and the *panchama* correspond to the *svarita* of the Vedic note, the *gandhara* and the *rishabha* to the *udatta*, and the *nishada* and the *dhaivata* to the *anudatta*. But the rationale Abhinavagupta furnishes discredits these assumptions. He says, *catuḥ-śrutir udāttaḥ ucchatvāt, dvi-śrutir anudāttaḥ nīcaivāt, tri-śrutir svaritaḥ madhya-vartīḥ atayā samāhāratvāt* (NS 4: 14). *Udatta* means the highest; therefore those *svaras* that have four *shrutis*, i.e., *sa*, *ma*, and *pa*, are *udatta*. *Anudatta* means lowest; therefore those *svaras* that have the lowest number of *shrutis* – only two *shrutis*, *ga* and *ni*, fall in this category – are *anudatta*. The *svarita svaras* are thus designated because of *samahara*, which in this context means conjunction or meeting point. Therefore, the *svarita svaras* are those that lie in between (*madhya-vartina*) the *udatta* of four

shrutis and the *anudatta* of two *shrutis*, i.e., *svaras* of three *shrutis*, *re* and *dha*.

4. The Indispensability of the *Madhyama* Note

Both Vedic and Gandharva music maintain that the note, *madhyama*, is *avinashi*, that is, it cannot be omitted in any scale, or in the pentatonic or hexatonic forms. But neither the Vedas nor Bharata advance any reason for thus privileging the *madhyama*.

Abhinavagupta clarifies this point at two places. Of page 14 of the fourth volume of the *Natyashastra*, he says: *tena paramārthataḥ traya eva svarāḥ – sa-ri-gāḥ, pa-dha-nayaḥ, madhyamas tu dhruvaka-sthānīyo madhyatvād eva*. That is, "Because the *madhyama* occupies a pivotal position, lying as it does at the very centre of the *saptaka* or heptad, it is *dhruva* or fixed, constant, immovable." It should be borne in mind that the concept of a scale in Indian music is that of the *saptaka* or heptad, not that of an *ashtaka* or octave. A *saptaka* consists of only seven *svaras*. The *madhyama* occupies the central position and divides the other notes of the *saptaka* into two equal halves, as has already been indicated above. The *madhyama* is the pivot, that on which something hinges or depends. But this much alone is not sufficient to explain the indispensability of the *madhyama*. There is a far deeper reason, one that involves the philosophy of the *madhya* or *madhyama*.

Abhinavagupta hints at this in his preliminary verse on the fourth volume of the *Natyashastra*. Unfortunately, the

reading of this verse as it appears in the current edition of in the text is also very corrupt. With a little correction, it would stand thus:

*madhyama-svara uṣanti yad-vaśan-
nādaṣaṭ-kumuditam śruti-kramāt,
so'pi yad-vilasitaḥ kalātmakaḥ tam
namāmi śiśirāṃśu-maṇḍanam.*

The gods are fond of the *madhyama* note through the power of which arises the group of six notes in accordance with the arrangement of *śruti*s. I bow to him (that is, Shiva) who is adorned with the moon, who has *kaala* as one of his *tattvas* and through whom even *madhyama* gleams as the central note.

In Shaiva philosophy, the central reality is said to be *madhya*. As the *Pratyabhijñā-bridayam* puts it:

*sarvāntaraḥmatvena vartamānatvāt
tad-bhitti-lagnātam vinā na kasyacid
api svarūpānupāpatteḥ samvid eva
bhagavati madhyam*

The exalted *samvit* or universal consciousness itself is the centre inasmuch as it is present as the innermost reality of all and inasmuch as the form or nature of anything whatsoever cannot be possible without its being attached to it as the ground or support.

Just as central reality or universal consciousness is the ground or support of everything, even so, the note *madhyama*, which is the pivotal point, is the ground or support of the entire heptad. Just as it is the *madhya* or the central reality from which arises everything in the universe, even so, it is the *madhyama* note from which arise all the other notes of the heptad (*uṣanti yad-vaśan-nāda-ṣaṭ-kumuditam śruti-kramāt*).

Gandharva, which was mostly ritualistic music, could not, therefore, drop *madhyama* in any case.

5. The Exposition of the *Kutapa*

Bharata calls the orchestral stage music *kutapa*. The word *Kutapa* ordinarily means "noonday heat," but Bharata does not give any explanation for his use of the word thus. It is Abhinavagupta who sheds light on it, saying, *ku raṅgam tapati ujjaḥvalayati* (NS 4: 2): *kutapa* is that which highlights the stage. It is the orchestral stage music which sets aglow the stage and attracts the attention of the spectators.

6. The Distinction Between Gandharva and Gana or Desi Ragas

Many musicologists seem to be labouring under the misapprehension that Gandharva music was the only classical music of our country, that Desi music did not exist during the time of Bharata, that when it became classicised, the scales – the *śadja-grama* and the *madhyama-grama* – and *śruti* patterns prescribed/described by Bharata became the only standard scales, and that later it abandoned these original scale and *śruti* patterns under the influence of Iranian music, which came to India with the advent of the Muslims. No musicologist has refuted these misapprehensions in terms as clear and as unambiguous as Abhinavagupta has. He shows, all through his commentary on the *Natyashastra*, that, on the contrary, Gandharva and Gana flourished side by side, and that there was a clear

distinction between the two, and that the aim of Desi music was different from that of Gandharva.

The words *gandharva* and *gana* have been used in two ways in our musical literature – in a *saamaanya* (or general) sense, and in a *vishesha* (or technical) sense. In a general sense, music was known as *gandharva* or *gandharva shastra*, while in a technical sense, only that which was described by Bharata in the *Natyashastra* or by Dattila in the *Dattilam* was known as *gandharva*. So also the word *gana*, which is used in these two senses by Bharata himself in the *Natyashastra*: Bharata uses the word *gana* in the general sense for any song, while in the technical sense, he uses it in connection with the *dhruvas*, as *grama ragas*, *bhasha*, *vibhasha*, and the like, that is, as *desi-ragas*.

Abhinavagupta delineates in detail the differences between Gandharva and Gana music in his commentary on the 33rd chapter of the *Natyashastra*. We shall take up separately each of the following that he says:

*gāndharvasya kiṃ lakṣaṇam? uktam
adhyāya-catustayeṣu muninā, tathāpy
anusandhāna-vandhyam mahā-
bhāgam bodhayitum
anusandhīyate.*

*svara-tāla-pada-viśeṣāt makam
pravṛtti-nivṛtti-pradhāna-dṛṣṭādrṣṭa-
phala-sāma-veda-prabhavam.*

*anādi-kāla-vṛttim anyonyo-
parañjanā-guṇatā-vihīnam
gāndharvam iti svarūpa-phalāt kālād
dharmāc ca bhidyamānam avāśyam
gāna-vailakṣaṇyam bhedaika-
sampādanam. (NS 394)*

Bharata in the first four chapters of *geyadbikara* has already provided the characteristics of Gandharva

music. Still, it is being investigated here for the sake of those who are destitute of the spirit of investigation. The distinctions between Gandharva and Gana or Desi music are four-fold. They differ in *svarupa*, that is, formal structure; in other words, in *svara*, *pada*, and *taala*. They differ in *phala*, that is, with respect to the end they serve and therefore in the resulting reward or *phala*.

They differ in respect of *kaala*, that is, in respect of the occasion on which they are to be used.

They differ in respect of *dharmā*, that is, in respect of their distinct functions.

(i) Difference in *Svarupa* or Formal Structure

Under this head come *svara*, *taala*, and *pada*. Let us take up *svara* first. In Gandharva, in the *shadja-grama*, the *svaras* or musical notes were employed at fixed intervals of *shrutis*, for example, the *rishabha* was on the third *shruti* above the *shadja*, the *gandhara* was on the second *shruti* above the *rishabha*, and so on. The *shruti* intervals were absolutely fixed, and no change was permitted in these. Abhinavagupta says that the rigidity of these *shruti* intervals was not observed in Gana or Desi music, illustrating this with examples from actual practice current in his time. He says:

*uktam api pratitam anucitrīyate
pratītanām api alakṣaṇa-jñānānām
bāla-vijñāna-vad vedyam.*

I am only elaborating what is *pratita*, that is, what is fairly recognised by musicologists. For those who do not know the *lakṣhanas*, that is, the science or theory of music, even facts known

from direct experience can remain unrelated, just as facts are known to the child, but their scientific rationale is not known to him.

Abhinavagupta proceeds to give practical examples:

svarāṇām mālava-kaiśike catu-śrutikāṅgasya darśanāt kiyad vā raga-bhāṣā-vibhāṣā-deśi-mārgādi-gatānām svarāṇām śruti-vaicitryam brūmah. (NS 4: 394)

In *Malava-kaiśika*, there is a greater number of *svaras* with the four-*shruti* interval than is permitted in *Gandharva*. I say there is great diversity in the use of *shrutis* in the *svaras* employed in several *ragas*, *bhasha*, *vibhasha*, *desi*, *marga*, etc.

He adds:

kim ca antarāla-niyamo ... gāndharve vasya-samvedhaḥ, na tv evaṃ gāne. (NS 304)

The rule regarding *shruti*-intervals has to be strictly observed in *Gandharva* music, but not so in *Gana*.

Again he says,

lopo'pi niyata-gāndharve darśito grāma-dvaya-bhedena ca jāty-amśa-bhedena darśito, gane tu rakty-anusāreṇa pravṛtter asāv aniyataḥ, tatbāpi gāndharve yasmād anāśritvam eva samarthitam tasyāpi madhyamasya bhinna-śadja-kālinyām lopo'drśyaḥ. (NS 304)

Dropping of notes in the two *gramas* and on the basis of *amśa* notes in each *jati* was governed by definite rules in *Gandharva*. For instance, *dhaivata* was indispensable in the *jatis* of *śadja-grama*, and in the *jati* of *madhyama-*

grama, *pañchama* could never be dropped from any *jati* of either *grama*, but in *Gana*, any note could be dropped in order to bring about a particular aesthetic effect. Even *madhyama*, which is considered to be indispensable in *Gandharva*, is dropped in *bhinna-śadja* in *Gana*.

Abhinavagupta quotes the *vṛiddha*, *Kashyapa*, as saying:

kākaly-antara-yogena catus-tri-dvayekataḥ śrutīm, svarān sarvān prayuñjīta rāga-bhāṣāsu sarvathā. (NS 34, ch. 28)

In *ragas* and *bhashas*, all the *kakali* and *antar* notes can be used, and all notes, whether with a four *shruti* interval, or a three-*shruti* interval or a two-*shruti* interval or even with a one *shruti* interval, can always be employed.

It is difficult to determine with any degree of exactitude the period in which the old *Kashyapa* lived. However, everyone acknowledges that he is from very ancient times. Perhaps he belonged to the sixth or the seventh century.

Even in such a distant age, going by the testimony of the elder *Kashyapa*, the use of *kakali nishada* and *antar gandhara* was allowed freely in *raga* and *bhasha*, that is, in *Desi* music, whereas their use was allowed only in a few *jatis* in *Gandharva* music, and similar freedom was allowed in the use of notes with different *shruti* values.

Thus stands the distinction in *svara* with respect to *Gandharva* and *Desi* music. Now, of their distinction with regard to *taala*, *Abhinava* says:

tālo'pi gāndharve niyatattvena sankhyā parimaṇām bhāñjanam paricchedopāyaṃ yati-svarair vṛttim

*eva melanam ātodya-yogam
angāṅgibhāva-vyāvarudhyamānaḥ
sāmya-mātra-phalam.* (NS 395)

In Gandharva, *taala* was also governed by rigid rules that measured time through a fixed number of demarcations. It occupied a secondary position (*angāṅgibhāva*) to *svara*. Its main aim was to establish *saamyā* or equipoise. In Gana, *taala* was flexible: there was room for the improvisation of patterns to bring out aesthetic pleasure. In Gandharva, no deviation from the set pattern was permitted. The purpose of *taala* here was simply to provide fixed measurement to the notes; in *nana* there could also be colourful rhythmic playing.

There was a distinction between Gandharva and Gana with respect to *pada* also. In Gana, *pada* was more predominant than *svara* or *taala*. In Gandharva, however, *svara* and *taala* were primary and *pada* occupied a subsidiary position. Bharata himself says:

*Gāndharvaṃ yan mayā proktaṃ
svara-tāla-padātmakam, Padaṃ tasya
bhaved vastu svara-tālānubhāvakam.*
(NS 32.27)

I have already said (in chapters 28–31) that Gandharva consists of *svara*, *taala*, and *pada*. In this, *pada* is used only as an aid to project *svara* and *taala*.

Unfortunately, some musicologists have interpreted this wrongly. Abhinava's commentary makes quite clear what Bharata wanted to convey. He says:

*kiṃ tv anyathā tasya prādhānyam
anyathā ca gāndharve, tatra hi svara-
tālau pradhānam, tau ca anādhārau*

*na śakyau prayoktum ity ādhāratayā
yad-upayogi tad āha svara-
tālānubhāvakam iti* (NS 4: 301).

The role of *pada* is different in Gana and Gandharva. In Gandharva, primacy is given to *svara* and *taala*. Since *svara* and *taala* could not be used without the base of *pada*, therefore *pada* is useful only as a base for *svara* and *taala*. That is the reason why Bharata says that *pada* serves as an aid to *svara* and *taala*.

We thus see that Abhinava delineates clearly the difference between the Gandharva- and Desi-*ragas* with respect to *svarūpa*, that is, with reference to *svara*, *taala*, and *pada*.

(ii) Difference with Respect to *Phala*

While defining the Gandharva, Bharata says:

*atyartham iṣṭam devānāṃ tathā prīti-
karam punaḥ, gandharvānāṃ ca
yasmād dhi tasmād gāndharvam
ucyate.* (NS 28.9)

Because it is extremely desired by the gods and gives great pleasure to the *gandharvas*, therefore it is called *gandharva*.

Commenting on this, Abhinava says:

*anādītvād dṛṣṭādrṣṭa-phalatvāc ca
pradhānam gāndharvam..., gānam hi
prīti-kārye vartate, tena tādātmyam
tāvad ayuktam.*

Gandharva has been used from time immemorial. It has both *drishta* and *adrishta phala*, that is, it is both pleasant (which is evident), and lays in store merit for the future according to which one earns liberation or is given a place in heaven, which is not evident (*adrishta*). But Gana is used only

for its pleasant or aesthetic effect.
It is, therefore, unjust to identify
the two.

(iii) Difference with Respect to *Kaala*

Abhinava shows the distinction between the two with respect to *kaala* or occasion when each is to be employed in drama, saying that Gandharva could be used only in the *purvaranga*, which was a kind of ritual prologue to the drama. In the actual play itself, only *dhruvas* could be sung in *grama-ragas* and other forms of Desi music.

(iv) Difference with Respect to *Dharma*

It is not clear what exactly Abhinavagupta means by *dharma*, as he does not elaborate upon this point in his commentary. Dr. Mukund Lath thinks that by *dharma* Abhinava means "function." The function of Gana or Desi music was aesthetic pleasure, that of giving pleasure to the listeners, while that of Gandharva was to please only the gods.

I have dwelt somewhat at length on the distinction between Gandharva and Gana, because I feel that this is a very important contribution Abhinavagupta makes towards the solution of a major problem in Indian music. All our *sangita-shastris* have tried to describe the *desi ragas* in terms of Bharata's *shruti* scheme and failed miserably, with the result that a wide gulf has been created between theory and practice in the *granthas* (textbooks) of music. Surely our Desi *ragas* borrowed many principles from Gandharva music. The sources of

many of the *ragas* were *jatis*. But Desi music did not adhere strictly to all the principles of Gandharva music. While Gandharva music would not countenance any change whatsoever in its principles, Desi music made many changes in the interest of aesthetic pleasure. Changes were introduced even in *grama ragas*, which were based on Gandharva music and formed a link between the Gandharva and the Desi *ragas*. Sarangadeva, for instance, writes:

*prasiddhāḥ grāma-rāgādyāḥ kecid
deśīṇy apīhitā.*

(*Sangita-ratnakara* 2: 16)

Some of the famous *grama ragas*
have come under the category of
Desi *ragas*.

In place of Bharata's nine-*svara* scheme (seven *shuddha* and two *vikrita*), Desi music adopted the twelve-*svara* scheme of the Muslims and was changed completely. In contrast to this is the mistaken belief of many musicologists who hold that Desi music was a later development, unlike Gandharva music, which according to them is the only standard classical music of India.

Acharya Kailasa Chandradeva Brihaspati, one of our best musicologists, has also unfortunately fallen victim to this myth. In an article published under the title "*Bhairava raga abharatiya hai*" ("Bhairava raga is non-Indian") in Hathras's *Sangita*, and included in the second edition of the *Sangita-chintamani*, he argues that both the Bhairava and the Malavagauda *ragas* are non-Indian for two reasons: first, that the *svaras* of Bhairava do not fit in with the *shruti* scheme outlined by Bharata,

and second, the Bhairava *raga* as given in *Sangita-ratnakara* is quite different from the one in vogue at present.

Abhinavagupta's views regarding the distinction between Gandharva and Gana are enough to demolish all such *ipse dixit* pronouncements. He has shown that Gandharva and Gana existed side by side, that even Bharata had advised the use of *nana* or *desi-raga* in the *dhruvas*, and that though the *desi ragas* adopted some of the principles of the Gandharva, they did not always adhere to the *shruti* scheme prescribed by Bharata. Abhinava also quotes the *vriddha* Kashyapa, as mentioned earlier, to show that deviations from Bharata's *shruti* scheme were freely made in the *desi ragas*. He even points to practical examples current in his time and says categorically: *kiyaḍ vā rāga-bhāṣā-deśi-mārgādi-gatānām svarāṇām śruti vaicitryam brūmah*.

So the Bhairava *raga* cannot be ruled out on the basis of *shruti vaicitrya*. If Bharata's scheme of *shruti* and *murchana* is to be accepted as the basis of all *desi ragas*, then not only the Bhairava, but many other *ragas*, such as Marava, Purvi, Vasanta, Puriya Danasri, and several others, will also have to be excluded as non-Indian.

Another reason Acharya Brihaspati advances for his conclusion is that there is sufficient difference between the structure of the Bhairava as described in the *Sangita-ratnakara* and the one in vogue today. This too is not a valid reason for declaring Bhairava non-Indian. *Desi* music has never been hide-bound like the Gandharva. There is sufficient difference between the ancient Malava-kaishika and the modern

Malkosa. That does not prove that the Malkosa is non-Indian. The very premise that whatever does not accord with Bharata is not Bharatiya is preposterous and fallacious. Indian music has certainly been influenced by Iranian music, but that influence started much later, in about the thirteenth century. But even before that, many changes had been made from time to time in *Desi* music. Abhinavagupta's long discussion of this problem is itself an immense contribution towards clarifying the distinction between Gandharva music and *Desi* music, and elaborating on the internal changes that had come about over time in *Desi* music.

7. Kulaka

This is yet another of the stellar contributions made by Abhinavagupta to the study of music. It is probably not well known that Abhinavagupta wrote a commentary on the *Ghatakarpara-kavya*, believed to be by Kalidasa, known as *Ghatakarparakulaka-vivritti*, as is clear from the colophon, which says: *samāpta iyaṁ ghaṭa-karpara-kulaka-vṛttiḥ, kṛtir mahāmāheśvara-rājānaka śrīmad abhinavagupta-pādānām*. On page 20 of his commentary, Abhinava says:

*kiñ ca atrā karta mahā-kaviḥ
kālidāsa iti anusrutam asmābbih*

The tradition goes that this is a poem composed by Kalidasa.

Some believe that this is a poem by the poet Ghatakarpara. But the last stanza of the poem itself gives the reason why it is called *Ghatakarpara-kavya*. The poem is full of *yamakas*, that is, the repetition in

the same stanza of words or syllables similar in sound but different in meaning. In the last stanza of this poem, the poet says that he is prepared to render as punishment even such humble service as carrying water in a broken pot (*ghata-karpara*) for the person who could defeat him in the use of *yamakas*.

Dr. K. C. Pandey has, in his work on Abhinavagupta, argued at length to the effect that the poem was composed by Kalidasa. We are only concerned with the word *kulaka* and its musical significance. The identity of the composer of the poem is irrelevant for us. The word *kulak* simply means collection; it is used here in a technical sense. *Kulaka* is a type of musical-poetic composition, all the songs of which present one continuous theme. *Kulaka* was a *gita-kavya* meant to be presented on the stage.

In Abhinavagupta's time, dance, drama, and music, as described in the

Natyashastra, were a living form of art in Kashmir.

From a study of Abhinava's commentary, it appears that the *gita-kavyas* were of two types: the pure *gita-kavyas*, and the *nritya-kavyas*. The pure *gita-kavyas* were such as could be presented on the stage with music, dance, and acting. *Nritya-kavyas* were songs that consisted of meaningless syllables, fit only for dance, the *Nirgita* or the *Bahirgita* being examples of *nritya-kavya*.

The *Kulaka* was purely *gita-kavya* presented on the stage. Abhinavagupta's *Ghatakarparakulaka-vivritti* goes to prove that the *Kulaka* was a living form of art in Kashmir which went out of vogue with the decline of Gandharva music. In the first volume of the *Natyashastra*, Abhinava speaks both of poets of *gita-kavyas* in Kashmir, such as Ranaka, as well as of *gita-kavyas* he had seen on the stage (NS 190).

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Karanas and Angaharas: Some Pearls from the *Abhinavabharati*

Padma Subrahmanyam

THE ABHINAVABHARATI (ABH), MAHESHVARA Abhinavaguptacharya's commentary on the *Natyashastra* (NS), is a beacon-light for the ocean that is the *Natyashastra*. The *Abhinavabharati* is important not only because it is the only complete commentary available as of date, but also because it has all the qualities of an ideal commentary.

Abhinavagupta himself explains his methodology, stating that his governing principle had been to examine all that was to be assimilated, eliminating the irrelevant, elucidating with clarity, solving the problems of any possible contradictions, all the while abiding by the convictions of the original work, deciphering riddle-like double meanings, spotting the comparisons, justifying any possible repetitions, and doing all this with the quality of brevity in mind (ABh 1.1.5-6).

Abhinavagupta was not a mere *Natyacharya* (teacher of theatre). True to his name, he was a forerunner of all modern thought on the performing arts, poetics and philosophy. He was able to do justice to all these branches of knowledge, and has left behind him phenomenal achievements, his commentary on the *Natyashastra* being the most consummate of these. His pen never hesitated to point out the mistakes of his contemporaries, and he is seen freely quoting, agreeing and differing with other commentators. Abhinava's bold authoritative scrutinising character gives his commentary its charm, pep, uninterrupted interest, eloquence, and, of course, its erudite complexity. Unfortunately, the few available translations of the *Natyashastra* do not provide translations of the *Abhinavabharati*.

Knowledge was considered to be part of the common heritage of ancient India or Bharatavarsha, available

Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam, the legendary Bharatnatyam dancer, is a rare combination of dancer, research scholar, choreographer, music composer and musician, teacher, author and Indologist. The recipient of many awards and honours, including the Padma Bhushan, the Padmashri, and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, to name but three, she has been a trailblazer in the field of dance and music. She is now the director of the dance school, Nrithyodaya, at Chennai.

to all parts thereof. The universal appeal and adherence to Abhinavagupta's theory can be proved from the simple fact that this Kashmiri scholar's work has been well preserved in the form of manuscripts in Kerala and sculpture in Tamil Nadu. That knowledge emanated from minds at work in different parts of the subcontinent, and that these currents travelled far and wide is revealed by Abhinava himself, in the *Tantraloka*, where he lays out his teacher-disciple genealogy (*guru-shishya-parampara*). Here he says that the sage who gave him the light of true knowledge was Shambhunatha, of the Tryambaka school of philosophy, who belonged to Jalandhara (Punjab); his preceptor and grand-preceptor, Somanatha and Sumalinatha respectively, were both sages who lived in South India, while Matsyendranath of Kamarupa (Assam) originated the Kaula system of Shaiva-yoga. Abhinavagupta's was obviously a period that cared for truth and beauty, irrespective of where it came from, for the primary realisation that governed the world-view of this tradition of thought was that the whole earth is itself a manifestation of Lord Shiva (see the third introductory verse of the *Abhinavabharati*).

Abhinavagupta was the author of many important works. Some of them are the two *Vimarshinis* on Utpaladeva's *Ishvarapratyabhijna*, his teacher's teacher (*parama-guru*) in Kashmiri Shaivism. Abhinava's *Paramarthasara* and *Bodhapanchadasika* are for beginners in that field, while the *Tantraloka* and *Tantrasara* are on the Trika system of

Yoga, and the *Tripura-rahasya* discusses Tantric philosophy. His collection of poems includes *Kramastotra*, *Anuttarastika-Bhairava-stotra*, *Anubhavanivedana-stotra* and *Debastha-Devata-stotra*. Abhinavagupta was also a great master of rhetoric (*alamkara-shastra*). His commentaries on Anandavardhana's *Dhvanyaloka* are on the theory of suggestion (*dhvani*), while that on the *Natyashastra* deals with the theory of aesthetic emotion (*rasa*). Abhinavagupta seems to have composed dozens of works, if the quotations from them in other works are anything to go by. His brief commentary on the *Bhagavad-gita* is said to be remarkable for throwing light on secrets of practical Yoga. Like a true Yogi, in possession of unified control upon body and mind, he is able to analyse and make us appreciate the aesthetic value of the kinetics of the human physique as well as its relationship with the psyche. The fourth chapter of the *Abhinavabharati* offers ample proof of this.

The fourth chapter of the *Natyashastra*, titled "The Definition of the Vigorous Dance" (*tandava-lakshanam*), is the most important portion of this text as far as dance technique is concerned. Sri Ramaswami Sastri¹ states that "this section of *Natyashastra* dealing with *karanas*, being of a highly technical nature, was less understood and was rendered more difficult by numerous errors committed by the scribes as well as by the omissions of large portions in the manuscripts" (NS 22). However, Sarangadeva's

¹ Sri Ramaswami Sastri is the editor of the revised edition of the *Natyashastra with the Abhinavabharati* (herein abbreviated NS), and this edition, unless otherwise specified, has been referred to in this piece.

Sangita-ratnakara (twelfth century AD) has been of great help to the editors of *Abhinavabharati*, and also to me, in reconstructing the *karanas*, as the seventh chapter of this work deals with dance, and the portion concerning the *karanas* seems to be just a verification of Abhinava's prose.

Karanas

Bharata's aphorisms are so brief that it is impossible to get any ideas for a practical reconstruction of the *karanas*, *angaharas*, *pindibandhas*, and *rechakas*, all of which had been out of vogue for nearly five centuries. For example, Bharata's very definition of *karana*, in chapter 4 of the *Natyashastra*, as *hasta-pāda-samyogah nṛttasya karaṇam bhavet* (line 30), which means, literally, that the combination of hands and feet in dance (*nṛtta*) produces *karana*, is very vague from the practical point of view.

However, Abhinavagupta's crystal-clear explanation is so illuminating that any earnest student with the patience to read him carefully will be able to picture the concept vividly. Abhinavagupta says that the words *hasta* and *pada* do not denote merely the hand and foot. *Hasta*, he says, denotes all actions pertaining to the upper part of the body, while *pada* denotes all actions of the lower limbs of the body. *Hasta* implies *śakha anga* ("branch limbs") and *upanga* ("subsidiary limbs"), and *pada* denotes sides, waist, thighs, shanks and feet (NS 90).

The *nṛtta karanas* are often misunderstood and referred to as postures and poses. A combination of *sthana*, *chari*, and *nṛtta hasta* gives rise

to a whole movement and not a mere posture. The sculptural representations of the *karanas* are often imitated in their static attitude by some of the performing artists of today, when the fact is that these sculptures are just moments frozen from movements: they represent only one stage of each of the *karanas*, which may be the beginning, the main course, or the end. This fundamental point about the *karana* must be properly grasped in order to penetrate the concept. The *karana* is not even a mere linking of many poses. It is a coordinated movement of the hands and feet, the action of which is based entirely on cogency. The movement should be aesthetically appealing to give it the status of dance.

From the etymological point of view, the word *karana* has its root in *krñ* meaning a doer, maker, causer, doing, making, causing, producing, helping, promoting, the act of doing and the doer, all of which are meanings the word *karana* itself also carries (see Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*). *Karana* may also convey the idea of being an instrument, an element, an *anga*, or part, of something, and in dance, it is a unit of action. Besides, there are words like *antahkarana*, which means "an inner part," i.e. the conscience. Also, *karana* can, in popular usage, refer to the "means," e.g., as in *manasā vācā karmaṇā trividha-karaṇaiḥ*, meaning "by the three means of thought, word, and deed." *Karana* is that which causes and also effects. In dance, *karana* is a contributory factor: it causes and effects the *angahara* (a dance sequence); at the same time, it is a helper

or companion, and hence instrumental in effecting action. It suggests motion and, hence, it should be of little wonder that it is the very name of a treatise on the motion of planets by Varahamihira.² In short, a *karana* in dance is to be understood as a basic unit of dance, of a dynamic, not merely static, nature.

Angika abhinaya or physical expression is threefold, namely, *shakha*, *ankura* and *nritta* (*Natyashastra-sangraha* 33, line 37). *Shakha*, which literally means branch, is the term used for the various movements of the hands (*kara varhana*): all the movements and gestures of the hands are termed *shakha*. *Ankura*, which literally means a sprout, is the movement of the hand that supplements an idea just represented. In this context, *shakha* and *ankura* can also be taken to mean the *abhinaya hastas* and the act of pantomiming through them respectively. The third element of *angika abhinaya* is *nritta* which is nothing but dance made up of *karanas* and *angaharas*. *Nritta* employs all the *angas* and *upangas*.

Angas are the major limbs of the body, and these include the head, chest, sides, waist, hands and feet. *Upangas* are the minor limbs, which include the neck, elbows, knees, toes and heels. The *upangas* of the face include eyes, eyebrows, nose, lower lip and chin. Thus, according to Abhinavagupta's commentary on Bharata's definition of the *karana*, the words *hast* and *pada* imply practically all the *angas* and *upangas* of the body. Therefore, the actual performance of the *karana* compels a mastery over all the exercises

prescribed for the major and minor limbs. Bharata himself says that all the exercises of the feet prescribed for the *sthanas* and *charis* apply to the *karanas* (NS ch. 4, lines 169-72), adding that the actions of the hands and feet must be suitably and coherently combined with those of the waist, sides, thighs, chest and back (NS ch. 4, line 58). This means that the flow of the movement should be such that the entire body is involved in the curves and bends: *karanas* are not the result of the isolated action of the specified limb alone. Instead, these actions have their own interactions, resulting in subtle nuances without any disruption, and these actions should be chosen with regard to their relevance to the *vrittis* and situations. Only such a coordinated movement merits being called a *karana*.

Abhinavagupta has defined *karana* as *kriyā karaṇam*: action is *karana* (NS 90). Action of what? The action herein referred to is that of *nritta*. Abhinava says *gātrāṇam vilāsaśēpasya*, it is the graceful throw of the limbs, a statement in which we can perceive the contemporary Western concept of space choreography. The *karana* thus involves space: it is a medium and a means for filling up space in an aesthetic way. The conquest of space and of natural forces forms part of the apotheosis of dance as established in the Dance of Shiva in the ethereal sphere. It is the duty of the dancer to realise this truth, experience it within herself, and to transfer this transcendental feeling into a visually tangible one. By this, the artist helps

² Adi Shankara's "Bhagavadgītā" has the phrase "ḍukṛṇkaraṇe."

the audience to share the indescribable bliss of freedom. This is no mere theoretical philosophy, but one that invests the practical experience of the performer with a meaningful ideal.

The stage is to be treated as a microcosmic form of the universe and a sense of unbounded freedom and even oneness with every part of it motivates motion in every direction. Then the dancer is here, there, everywhere. According to Abhinavagupta, the movements of the *karanas* are to cover space. He says, *pūrva-kṣetre samyogatyāgena samucita kṣetrāntara-prāptiparyantatayā ekā kriyā tattaranmityamartha*: the action commences at one point, proceeds on its course and culminates in its place or destination (NS 90). The throw (*kshepa*) of the limbs must be without any inhibition. What is experienced is a gay abandon. Such throws, or *kshepa*, must be guided by beauty and grace, denoted by the word *vilasa*, which, thus, signifies a free throw of the limbs in a pleasing manner. That is why, though he defines *karana* as *kriyā karanam*, Abhinava says it is different from the actions of normal life. *Karana* is here not mere placement, replacement or displacement; it has to be aesthetically appealing and intellectually and spiritually satisfying. The word *nrityasya* in Bharata's definition emphasises this basic aspect of dance. In *nritya* all the limbs of the body are involved: the *karana* is the life of *nritya*. That is why it is specifically called the *nritya karana*.

Another important aspect of *karana* is the peculiar combination of *stbithi* (a fixed position) and *gati* (motion).

According to Abhinavagupta, *karana* includes both *avasthana* and *gati* (NS 95). *Sthana* is the specific posture of the body that constitutes the predominant feature of any movement. *Sthanas* may be prescribed for both men and women, or even especially for women. *Sthanas* may be of the nature of standing, sitting, or lying down. A *sthana* represents a definite form of the lines of the body in a fixed condition. There may be a rhombus between the knees or it may be an erect posture. All these determine the static aspect of the *karana*. In a *sthana*, the hands and body are involved. Even if the *nritya hastas* undergo their specified course of action, the legs will not move away from their original placement (NS 95). The dancer's body does not venture into any additional space. Bharata outlines six *sthanas* for the standing posture in the tenth chapter, while the twelfth chapter provides three additional *sthanas* for women. These can be compared with the basic positions assumed by contemporary Western classical ballet dancers when they perform their exercises. *Sthanas*, thus, are definite postures, of a static nature that may be assumed by the body. Apart from the *abhinaya hastas*, meant for expressing the word-to-word meaning (*pada artha abhinaya*), there are thirty *nritya hastas*, described in the ninth chapter, which are performed in the *sthanas* and *charis* as well. *Nritya hastas* are the hand movements performed in a course of action for the entire arms. Their name is very apt, as the mere movements of the hands create the impression of *nritya*. When they are tied only to a *sthana*,

they do not lead to the occupation of any additional floor space and, thus, remain a static movement. If the *nritta hastas* are added to the *charis*, involving the movement of the legs, then, naturally, they may also be instrumental in motivating an intrusion into unoccupied space. Therefore, the agent of dynamism is the *chari*. By *gati*, Abhinavagupta means only the *chari*: *gatou tu caryāha* (NS 95). The *karana* is, therefore, a combination of *sthana* and *gati*.

Abhinavagupta's perception of the *karana* as a combination of *avasthana* and *gati* puts together two contrary concepts, the former being highly static and the latter, totally dynamic. What is the nature of this combination? It may be considered heterogeneous, but in reality, they are to be conceived and presented as a homogeneous product, and this is where artistry takes the upper hand. The essence of *karana* is that the moving *charis* and *nritta hastas* are built on fixed *sthana*s. This may be a movement in the Mandala *sthana* as in the *karana* called Mandala Svastikam, or a movement in the Vaishakha *sthana* as in the Vaishakha *karana*. It may also be a Sama *sthana* as in Samanakam and Linam. The static exists within the dynamic of the *karanas*. The body carries a certain specific posture even while moving about, and a certain amount of balance, for equilibrium, underlies its movements: for instance, while the feet are in fast movement, the torso might have to remain undisturbed, and when the foot is being lifted, the chest may be frozen in an erect posture, as seen in the Nisthambhitam *karana*, where even the breath is to be held. It is thus that the

karana is a unique combination of two contrary concepts: there is action in inaction. The limbs are involved, yet resolved, and for this, a tremendous sense of balance is required. A study of this peculiarity may well reveal several fundamental truths about universal and individualistic structures, as reflected in the concept of the Dance of Shiva in the Shaiva Agamas. This state of action in inaction is what is recommended even in the *Bhagavad-gita* in Karmayoga. Thus, the *karanas* may be viewed as the physical representation of metaphysical and spiritual perceptions.

Abhinavagupta says that, due to the countless possible combinations of *gati* and *sthiti*, the resultant *karanas* are innumerable, and that Bharata remarks only upon those useful for the *angaharas* (NS 95). Bharata's choice of the number 108 for the basic units of dance is in consonance with the general preference for this number, which is thought to be endowed with mystic value. For example, there are 108 rhythmic patterns (*talas* in the older system of Indian music). 108 is also the prescribed number for *archana* (a particular way of worship) and *japa* (silent chanting). The 108 *karanas* Bharata describes became the standard ones, but in later centuries, new movements were created and recorded under the name of Desi *karanas*.

Natya and Nritta

It is noteworthy that, in the fourth chapter of the *Abhinavabharati*, Abhinavagupta posits that *nritta* (dance) and *natya* (theatre) are not different.

This claim of Abhinavagupta's is as important as his world-renowned theory of *rasa*, and deserves greater attention. It is essential to understand Bharata's concept of *natya* and *nritya* to appreciate the commentator's re-establishment of the same, with greater accuracy of analysis and intensity of expression.

Bharata's *natya* was "drama" and *nritya* or "dance" was one of the elements that served not only to beautify this art, but also as a medium of expression. *Nritya*, according to medieval authorities, was defined as purely non-representational dance devoid of *bhava* and *rasa*.

Abhinavagupta's theory reflects the true nature of the older tradition where *nritya* is an integral part of *natya* and hence representational in character. *Angika abhinaya* or physical expression includes *nritya* proper. Abhinavagupta says that mono-acting is also part of *natya*: in the dramatic genre (*rupaka*) called *Bhāṇa*, many *angaharas* are danced by a single artist. The various kinds of heroines in *natya* also dance. In short, Abhinava says that *nritya* is not different from *natya*, for their defining characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) are the same.

Nritya seems to have been used as *angika abhinaya* to express the ideas of whole sentences, mood and character. Unless the nature of *natya* in those bygone days is kept in mind, an appreciation of this would be beyond us. *Natya* or drama was highly stylistic in character. The *natya-dharmi* mode was the basis on which dance was woven into the actual play. The *natya* was hence staged through the actors singing, speaking and dancing in their roles. It included the four kinds of expression, namely, through the physique (*angika*),

words (*vachika*), costumes, make-up and scenery (*aharya*), and last but not the least, feeling (*sattvika*). *Nritya karanas* were employed to express various emotions, and they are an instance of the amazing insights our ancients had into the psychological effect of physical movements.

Illustrating with examples how *karanas*, which may figure in the *purvaranga* (preliminaries) of the *Natya* as well as in the body of the play, are to be used, Abhinavagupta says that many of them are useful in communicating items through *vākyaṛthābhinaya*, the physical enactment of the meanings of sentences (NS 96). For instance, the actor enacting Ashvatthaman's role enters with the *Suchi Viddha* ("Needle-Pierced") and *Urdhvajanu* ("Uplifted Foot") *karanas*: this is a reference to Bhatta Narayana's high drama (*nataka*) with a mythological theme, *Veni-sambhara* ("The Binding of the Hair"). In Kalidasa's play (*nataka*) *Vikramorvasiyam*, the hero Pururavas enters with the *Alapallava* and *Suchi karanas*. Garuda enters with *Garuda-plutam*; Ravana with the *Vaishakha Rechitam*; Vatsaraja, in the play *Svapna-vasavadatta*, comes in with *Sambhranta*. Therefore, *nritya* and *natya* are considered the same. Hence, we are able to perceive the extraordinary relationship that exists between the physique and the psyche, which are two salient aspects of dance and drama respectively.

Karanas also have in them a psychological element, which Abhinava studies, quoting from Prakrit plays,

phrases or dialogues or situations.³ It is unfortunate that his language and the source-text are obscure. His elucidation of the first *karana*, *Tala-pushpa-plutam*, is, however, most lucid: Abhinavagupta makes the concept of *vākyārthābhinaya* crystal-clear through his recommendation of this *karana* to enact the entire Nandi *sloka* of Sriharsha's *Ratnavali*, which starts with the words *padāgra* etc., providing thus a complete understanding of how to relate mood with movement. Hence *nritta karanas* are capable of radiating emotions. They are not only physical and intellectual conceptions, but they shine as physical reactions deriving from inner feelings. Thus does *nritta* produce *bhava* according to Abhinavagupta's theory. Commenting upon the fifteenth *karana*, Abhinavagupta categorically states that every *karana* is capable of conveying some idea at least in a very subtle way. In his explanation of the sixty-sixth *karana*, he also adds that wherever the use of the *karana* is not stated, it is left to the imagination of the performer.

Angahara

Abhinavagupta defines *angahara* as the process of moving the limbs from one place to another. Because it is loved and practiced by Hara (Shiva), the shadow of his name is incorporated in the term *angahara*. *Angahara* must be understood as the twisting and bending of the limbs in a graceful manner (NS 167-68).

Once the *karanas*, the basic exercises and the units of dance, have been mastered, their simple combinations are

to be learnt. The *matrika* is made up of two different *karanas*: two *karanas* make up a *nritta-matrika*. Two, three or four *matrikas* make an *angahara*; three *karanas* make a *Kalapaka*; four, a *Sandaka*; five, a *Sanghataka*, and so on. *Matrikas* and *angaharas* are used in *pindibandhas* (group dances).

The *angaharas* have an individual existence in both *nritta* and *natya*, and may also form part of *nritya* (expressive, as opposed to pure, dance). In terms of aesthetic appeal, they may be compared with the Jatis of Sadi, (the Bharata-natyam of today), Tirmanas of Bhagavatamela, Bois of Kathak and Kalasam of Kathakali. Bharata has enumerated thirty-two *angaharas*, which are specific groupings of *karanas*. While the *angaharas* do not have to follow any particular order, the order of the occurrence of the *karanas* in each *angahara* is important. According to Abhinavagupta, though there are 108 *karanas*, only sixty-four of these are most important from the point of view of cogency of rhythm (*gati*). But even Abhinavagupta concedes that though innumerable *angaharas* can arise on the basis of correlation of movements and rhythm, only thirty-two have been enumerated, because these are the ones that are most fruitful in terms of visual appeal, and these are the ones that ought to be taught and mastered in particular (NS 89).

Pindibandha

Pindibandha referred to dances which involved more than one dancer. In short,

³ See "Enumeration of Karanas" in Padma Subrahmanyam, "Karanas in Indian Dance and Sculpture."

the *pindibandha* is the technique of group formations. Bharata's classification of these, it turns out, offers a most modern concept of group choreography, which is especially studied in Western schools. In the last few centuries, many of the classical dance forms of India have been primarily driven by solo dance performances. Though the idea of group dance still continued to exist in folk dances like the Dandaras, Raslila, Kolattam, Kummi, Pinnal Kolattam and similar other dances in several parts of India, the classical traditions, like Sadi, Odissi, and Kathak, consolidated their focus on solo dances to the point that, even when they involved more than one dancer, there was no variety in their formations. In the present context, when producing dance dramas is the fashion, a revival of Bharata's *pindibandhas* is sure to open new vistas for Indian choreographers.

The term *pindibandha*, however, has not been defined anywhere by Bharata. Abhinavagupta describes it as *piṇḍī ādhāra āṅgādi saṅghātaḥ*: *pindī* is a collection of all those basic elements that make a composite whole. He also states that *angaharas* form the core of the *pindibandhas*, but that is not all, as even two *karanas* can form a *pindī*. That is how the *nritta-matrika* becomes important. Just as the sky is spoken of as being with and without limit, *pindis* are said to exist both in parts and also as a whole, and this is why the word *pindibandha* is used, because the *pindī* draws into itself every aspect and ties these together (NS 167-68).

Abhinavagupta says that the *pindis* reveal the manifestation of the Lord, meaning by this the several formations

of groups to satisfy or portray different deities. Bharata provides the following list of *pindis*:

Ishvara pindī for Ishvara
Pattasi, i.e. *Suelam pindī* for Nandi
Simhavahini for Chandika
Tarkshya (*Garuda*) for Vishnu
Padma pindī for Brahma
Airavati for Indra
Jasha (Fish) *pindī* for Manmatha
Shikhi pindī (Peacock) for Kumara
Padma for Shri (Lakshmi)
Dhara (drops of water) for
 Jahnavya (Ganga)
Pasa pindī for Yama
Nadi (River) for Varuna
Yakshi for Kubera
Hala (Plough) for Balarama
Sarpa for Bhogis (Nagas)
Mahapindī for Ganeshvari, for
 breaking Daksha's sacrifice
Trisulakriti for Rudra who
 annihilated Andhakasura.
 (NS lines 253-58)

Rechaka

The beautifying agent that gives grace and refinement to all the above aspects of *nritta* is the *rechaka*. Manmohan Ghosh translates Bharata's definition as "the term *rechita* (relating to a limb) means moving it round separately (i.e., not in any *karana* or *chari*) or its drawing up or its movement of any kind, separately" (66). The definition itself is rather obscure, and the translation makes it even more puzzling. A major problem that we face is that the ten lines of Bharata's *Natyashastra* relating to the *rechakas* are not available in the manuscripts of the *Abhinavabharati* (see NS 163, ff2). Abhinavagupta's recension has only the names of the four *rechakas*. Their definitions are missing. Hence, we

have to contend ourselves with speculating upon the data in the sources available. Sarangadeva's *Sangita-ratnakara*, which closely follows the *Abhinavabharati* for its *nritya* chapter, also does not enlighten us any further, and Kallinatha, its commentator, just adds that *rechakas* form part of the *angaharas*.⁴ Since Sarangadeva does not give us details in his work, it is possible that Abhinavagupta himself had not commented more on this. Probably the recension of the *Natyashastra* that he knew did not have these ten lines, or these lines may also be an interpolation. However, the *rechakas* seem to have had some place of importance in Bharata's time itself, for he mentions its four classifications, namely the *rechakas* of the feet (*pada*), waist (*kati*), hands (*basta*) and neck (*griva*).⁵

Further evidence of the fact of their existence before Abhinava's time may perhaps be adduced upon consideration of the commentary followed by the sculptors of *karana* figures at the Brihadishvara temple (1000-1006 AD) at Tanjavur. Dr. T. N. Ramachandran's view that they have followed the *Abhinavabharati* does not seem to hold upon close scrutiny.⁶ As Abhinavagupta is generally thought of as having lived between the ninth and eleventh centuries, the impact of the Kashmiri scholar's work could not have reached

Chola country in as short a period as the presumed gap between the composition of his work and the building of the temple in question. In fact, some of the sculptures even seem to differ from the *Abhinavabharati*. The practical reconstruction of the *karanas* without and with the help of this commentary reveals the evolution they underwent during the centuries between Bharata and Abhinavagupta. If we follow Bharata, we derive a particular movement, but following Abhinavagupta's interpretation changes the shape of the same. The Tanjavur figures represent Bharata's thoughts directly, and do not mediate them through the lens of the only available commentary upon the *Natyashastra*. This is an even greater asset for a performer, because of the possibilities they offer of the existence of more than one interpretation for at least some of the *karanas*. *Karanas* 1, 4, 7, 8, 31 and 49, to quote a few examples, differ from Abhinavagupta's commentary and yet authentically follow Bharata.

The commentary that might have been followed for the creation of the Kumbhakonam series of *karana* figures at the Sargopani temple (twelfth century AD), it has to be confessed, is more difficult to pinpoint. While the *Abhinavabharati* seems indeed to have been of very great help, there are yet

⁴ See Kallinatha's comments on line 797 of ch. 7 of the *Sangita-ratnakara*, where he says that the *rechakas* are useful in adjusting the time unit.

⁵ *pāda-recaka ekaḥ syat dvitīya kati-recaka kara-recakas tritīyas tu caturthaḥ kaṇṭha-recakaḥ* (NS ch. 4, line 248). See my doctoral thesis, "Karanas in Indian Dance and Sculpture," for a solution to the problem of understanding the *rechaka* from a practical angle.

⁶ See T. N. Ramachandran's "Dance Karanas of Bharatanatyam Sculptures in Tanjore and Kumbhakonam Temples," *The Mail* (1970), Madras.

some figures that do not agree with the descriptions found in this text: they may represent either some other reading of the *Natyashastra*, or even contemporaneous practice. *Karanas* 4, 19, 62, 76, 78, 80, 93 and 105 distinctly vary from Abhinavagupta's comments. *Karana* 93 of this series seems to follow Kirtidhara, as quoted by Jayappa in *Nritta-ratnavali*. This is not enough evidence, however, to conclude that all of them must have followed Kirtidhara. In any case, his work is not available for verification. It is also likely that those sculptures may have been based on some other commentary. No commentary other than Abhinavagupta's is available in full as of date. When the other commentaries see the light of day, more insight into the subject will emerge.

The *Abhinavabharati* has been extremely useful in interpreting the Chidambaram series of *karanas* at the Nataraja temple (thirteenth century AD), more so than even in the case of the sculptures at Tanjavur and Kumbhakonam.

Tandavam

Though Abhinavagupta was a great religious figure, his scientific approach is seen in his explanation of the term *tandava*. The *karanas* are said to be units of dance performed by Maheshvara. According to the mythology offered by the *Natyashastra*, when Bharata produced the drama *Tripuradaha* ("The Burning of the Three Cities") at Kailasa in the immediate presence of Shiva, this great God was reminded of his own dance, which he performs in the

evenings. Shiva asks Bharata to include this in his production, and Tandu is asked to teach the art to Bharata, because of which the dance came to be called *tandavam*. While commenting on this, Abhinavagupta, in spite of all his unshakeable Shiva *bhakti*, ventures a more rational explanation. While some authorities associate Tandu with Nandikeshvara, Abhinavagupta says that the *bhandam* (percussion instruments), which produce sounds like "Bhan, Than," etc., are important for *nritta*. Abhinavagupta says that the term *tandava* is derived from the sounds like "Tando" produced by the accompanying drums. Abhinava bases his explanation in grammar (*vyakarana*), using the onomatopoeic theory of sound to explain the origin of the term *tandava*.

The Dombika Form

Abhinavagupta's reference to *Dombika*, which figures among the references he makes to some contemporaneous traditions, is interesting from both the technical and sociological points of view. *Dombika* is a dance form performed by a single danseuse (*nartaki*), and which seems to have been erotic in nature, meant as an entertainment for the royal audience, designed to win favours. It certainly involves mastery over music and dance, in which the prince is himself addressed indirectly or directly as the Lover. The *dombika* also used speech. Further, the *dombika* does not change her original identity. In short, the *Dombika* must have been a form performed by the royal courtesans (*raja-dasi*).

Importance for Practice

Abhinavagupta, whom we perceive to be a great theoretician, attaches enormous importance to the actual practice of art. For example, while commenting on the definition of the *angahara* called *Apaviddham*, he remarks that the rhythm and action that are to be charmingly graceful cannot be comprehended unless one is an expert in the field. Only those who know how to handle the form can absorb the idea of the linking of movements through the use of the head, eyes, brows, etc., in chaining the *karanas*. Abhinavagupta categorically states that mere theoreticians will not be able to understand it: *anyasya tu utapi prayoktam asakya na cāpi nirūpayitum sakya* (NS 142). He then adds that, for the same reason, the definitions for the *sthanas*, *mandalas*, etc., advanced by some of his contemporaries are not useful. Two things can be inferred here: first, that Abhinavagupta had some practical understanding of the art, and second, that even during his time, the older technique was not easily understood, probably due to the gap between the writing of the *Natyashastra* and the *Abhinavabharati*.

Creativity and Tradition

Abhinavagupta's genius was revolutionary; his was a mind that could appreciate creativity and innovation. The catholicity of his approach to the concept of tradition, which is a result of true knowledge, is seldom met with, even in our twentieth century, least of all among the pseudo-guardians of our so-called traditions. Abhinavagupta opines

that since even Lord Shiva says that he was reminded of the *karanas*, it denotes that the origin of the art cannot be traced: it is without a beginning (*anadi*). Even he renewed it, ornamented it, repainted it, just as the Vedas were discovered and not invented. The construction of the Vedas is immortal. Yet every creature, in generation after unending generation, uses them according to her powers of perception and absorption. Thus, there is a need to re-invent prescriptions, to let them flow in a novel way, without interfering with the element of the artist's creativity. Such an attempt will lead to the creation of what may be called "an artifact" (*kritaka*). Each of the creations has its own postures, actions and even relevant rhythmic patterns, and they must be manifested without detriment to continuity. Therefore, like the Veda, *nritya* is not to be constricted by rigidly subscribing only to one interpretation. Such an action or creation ties up with the existing avalanche of previous creations, and thus attains permanence (*nitya*). Abhinava concludes that if this concept is clearly comprehended, there will be no contradiction between *kritaka* and *nitya*. Further, with regard to creativity, he explains the meaning of the term *datta*. *Datta* is one who knows the value of independence and is also capable of using his own intellectual faculties to create variety of an uncommon nature, and such a one truly brings in a fresh, beautiful perception. Therefore, beautification has a permanent value, and this value is certainly based on practice: these creations cannot be discarded or ignored. One really wonders at Abhinavagupta's

extraordinary support for modernity, his only criteria for acceptance of innovation being its beauty and continuity with historicity.

Drishta and Adrishta Phala

Abhinavagupta's religious, philosophic, and metaphysical perceptions are quite apparent from the fourth chapter of the *Abhinavabharati*, where he says that the fruit of the gentle dance (*lasya*) is that it pleases the Goddess (Devi) and that of Tandava is that it pleases Shiva who is with Soma (NS 177). Abhinava says that the spectators must either be entertained or enlightened – these aims should be at least intermittently addressed – but he also says these qualities were in short supply in his time.

Abhinava then analyses the results of performances from the mundane, perceptible and the spiritual, invisible levels. From a yogic angle, the result of singing is not considered to be tangible (*drishta*). But forms like *Dombika* are merely worldly (*laukika*), performed with the object of providing gross physical pleasure to the senses, along with economic advantage to the performer: this is at the level of perceptible fruits (*drishta phala*), though Abhinavagupta himself criticises the *Dombika* of his times as falling short of even these aims. The true fruit of art, however, is elsewhere for Abhinava: art has an intangible fruit (*adrishta phala*), apart from the entertainment value and vocational advantage of arts like *Dombika*. The very entry of the danseuse (*nartaki*) is meant to please the Gods. The gratification of the spectators is the core of the subject of *rasa* in *natya*,

but *natya* must cater to the goals of life (*purusharthas*): *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. Otherwise *natya* would merely become a means for living. Commenting upon the Pushpanjali ("offering of a handful of flowers") and rules regarding the theatrical preliminaries (*purvanga*), Abhinava says that while performing the dance-gestures (*abhinaya*) for Pushpanjali, one's looks must not be diverted towards the audience. It is not addressed to the spectators. It must be performed looking into one's own soul. This comment lights up the core of the monastic philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism. While enunciating the fruits of *natya* and its study (*phala-shruti*), he says that the dancers, actors, sponsors, and financiers and spectators are all purified of their sins and attain unlimited benefits, including entry into the realm of Shiva (*Shiva-loka*), merely through *nritta*. In the colophon at the end of this chapter, he refers to himself as "a supreme Shaiva teacher" (*maheshvaracharya*), whose ignorance is being burnt by the three eyes of Shiva, namely, the sun (*surya*), the moon (*chandra*), and fire (*agni*).

The *Abhinavabharati*'s staunchly Pratyabhijna Shaiva leanings are evident throughout. The very basic principles of monastic Kashmiri Shaivism are to be seen in Bharata's *Natyashastra* itself, and hence it is of little wonder that the most able propagator of this philosophy took upon himself the task of writing a commentary on it. Kashmir Shaivism, despite its spiritual aims, does not ignore the worldly goals of life, consisting of objective enjoyments. It advocates a path aimed at both enjoyment (*bhukti*) and liberation

(*mukti*), and both can be pursued simultaneously. Devotion (*bhakti*) is emphasised, but devotion is also made practicable. Devotion, enjoyment and liberation being very close to the goals of life (*purushartha*), the *Natyashastra* thus comes very close to the basic aims of Kashmiri Shaivism. Moreover, this Pratyabhijna philosophy accepts thirty-six principles (*tattvas*, constituted by the twenty-four *tattvas* of the Samkhya system in addition to twelve of its own. Ramaswamy Sastri says: "It is also believed that the *Natyashastra* has also been divided into thirty-six chapters by Bharata to harmonise or correspond to the thirty-six principles of Pratyabhijna philosophy of Kashmir" (NS 16).

Though Abhinavagupta's is the only extant full-length commentary, it is intriguing that all the other commentators of the *Natyashastra*, like Bhattodbhatta, Bhatta Lollata, Matragupta, Shankuka, Bhatta Nayaka and Bhattayantra, who flourished from the eighth century onwards, were all Kashmiris. Bharata himself is believed by some scholars, and the Kashmiris in general, to have belonged to Kashmir. It is a great tragedy that this art has practically been swept away from that heavenly region. Perhaps it is the duty of experts from other regions to erase this artistic poverty from that land, so bountifully endowed with nature's

charm. To perform this difficult, if not daunting, task, the other regions will also have to regain much of their lost traditions and values. May Bharata and Abhinavagupta re-establish themselves through the undying vitality of their works.

Abhinavagupta's elucidative work exhausts almost totally all the salient features of the art of theatre, not only that of Bharata's days, but also that of the commentators. From his commentary, we are able to conclude that the *Natyashastra* had taken its present form at least a thousand years ago. If we were to accept Dr. Manmohan Ghosh's dating of the *Natyashastra* to 500 BC (Ghosh lxv), Abhinavagupta's daring venture of clearing the hazy clouds shrouding the almost forgotten traditions of the dim past, as enshrined in the *Natyashastra*, becomes all the more awe-inspiring. Abhinavagupta himself he says that much of these older traditions have already been lost, and that he was writing his own commentary with a view to save these traditions from further oblivion and complete obliteration, wherein he leaves some room for inferences: *evam anyad api ūhyam iti an-upayogyāt samastam na likhitam āgama-bhramaṇa-rakṣanāya tu diṇ nirupitā* (NS 169). If that was the state of affairs a thousand years ago, what might turn out to be our destiny today?

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The Funhouse Mirror of Tantric Studies: A Rejoinder to David Gordon White's *Kiss of the Yogini*

Neela Bhattacharya Saxena

"IF THE HIGHEST REALITY did not manifest in infinite variety, but remained cooped up within its solid singleness, it would neither be the Highest Power nor Consciousness, but something like a jar," said Abhinavagupta in *Tantraloka* (qtd. in Jaidev Singh, *Pratyabhijnabridayam* 6). Perhaps it is a part of the great *lila* of the Devi and the multiplicity of her form that this land of milk and honey, the United States, is saturated these days with an ancient lore and path to liberation called Tantra. In a truly Tantric non-dual recognition, we must accept that all this is a manifestation of her infinite variety as the expanding universe of Tantra has begun to touch the lives of people who were probably least aware of such a tradition in their history. David Gordon White's *Kiss of the Yogini: "Tantric Sex" in Its South Asian Contexts* is yet another of those academic books that have been trying to solve the mystery of this "esoteric" tradition. While from a spiritual point of view we may marvel at this extraordinary proliferation of Tantric studies and its more commercial counterpart, the new virtual space of the World Wide Web where the Great Goddess appears in myriad, and sometime unintelligible, varieties that promise spiritual sex and instant nirvana, in the name of another Indic tradition of *shastrartha* that has stimulated people to engage in intellectual dialogue about the meaning of the *shastras*, this writer, a Shakta lover of Kali, wishes to look closely at this book that has already taken a hallowed and authoritative place in Western academia. In his preface, White narrates his search for an authentic Tantric practitioner who could initiate him into the mysteries of Tantra; his enthusiasm obviously got

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deflated when in 1974 in Benaras, the Bengali businessmen he had taken for a holy man, thanks to his beard and loincloth, points him to Arthur Avalon. This is the first time White hears the pseudonym of Sir John Woodroffe and explains that this was also his "first introduction to the funhouse mirror world of modern-day Tantra, in which Indian practitioners and gurus take their ideas from Western scholars and sell them to Western disciples thirsting for initiation into the mysteries of the East" (xi). In his many books since then, White has been ploughing the treasure house of Tantric knowledge systems, sometimes with remarkable accuracy as far as facts go. His extensive research yields an enormous amount of information about this embattled term Tantra and its infamous rituals, but the conclusions drawn from these findings come through a lens that warps and bends the information drastically.

In the *Kiss*, he has rather lofty goals in mind: to protect India from "heretical appropriation of Indian religious practice," to defend the "sensibilities of authentic modern-day Asian practitioners of Tantra, the silent Tantric majority," as well as to "deconstruct the 'product' that these modern-day entrepreneurs of ecstasy are selling to a benighted Western public" (xiii-xv). He also has a greater aim, that is to expose the scholasticising Hindus who since the days of Abhinavagupta have been "reforming" the original Kaula practice – "the production of powerful, transformative sexual fluids into simple

by-products of a higher goal: the cultivation of a divine state of consciousness homologous to the bliss experienced in sexual orgasm" (xii). White sets out to correct the record and finds a direct correlation between today's distorted New Age Tantra and "the second-order derivative" Tantra of Abhinavagupta and later scholars like Arthur Avalon who have been trying to rehabilitate Tantra.

I will contend that White, like many other scholars before him, had stumbled into and quite effectively proven the existence of what I have called the Gynocentric matrix of Indian spirituality in my book,¹ but until very recently, mostly androcentric and "Western" perspectives have seriously misread the tradition. Even when the avowed goals seem lofty, the results are no different from other claims in a long orientalising history; and, in many instances, these are the more insidious, especially in these days of the worldwide ascendance of consumerism, where the production and consumption of knowledge that marks academia is the hallmark of a new imperial structure. More importantly, unlike Arthur Avalon, an initiated Tantric, White, as a so-called "objective" scholar, epitomises the problems inherent in the readings of an "esoteric" tradition that never reveals its "secrets" to the outsider. Even initiation does not guarantee illumination, as the inner revelation requires a certain rare mindset and arduous *sadhana*. It is not a question of Eastern or Western traditions; White

¹ I use Gynocentric with a capital G in my book, *In the Beginning IS Desire: Tracing Kali's Footprints in Indian Literature* to denote a Shakta perspective.

misreads, as I will show later, even the Christian Eucharist, which is used by him as a benchmark of what can and cannot be taken literally.

These days it is fashionable for powerful elites to claim to understand the subaltern of every culture even though they have never experienced – and never will – the subalternity they report on by the very logic of their position. First, the Orientalists were interested in aligning with the Brahminic elite and constructing a racist ideology of high Aryan supremacy that would provide legitimating force to the colonising/civilising mission; so they claimed that all truth about India worth knowing was Brahminical. Now the tide has turned in the other direction, and scholars of a different ilk are hanging out with the bottom layer and claiming their constructed truth to be the final truth and the only truth! In deep sympathy with the “subaltern,” some profess to unseat the “distorting effect of the hegemonic voices of these elites” (*Kiss* 3). In the end, it is the elites who unseat other elites. Although such developments are positive in many instances, following perspectivist Nietzsche and the parable of the blind men trying to figure out the elephant, we can say “truth” is a rather elusive entity; and when it comes to using the hermeneutic tools of one’s culture to interpret alien cultural artifacts and practices from another time and context,

the road is even more slippery. While global exchange of knowledge is a desirable activity, extreme caution should be exercised before making claims of such a categorical and authoritative nature as White’s, as “Abhinavagupta’s ‘packaging’ of Tantra as a path to ecstatic, exalted god-consciousness was pitched at a leisured Kashmiri populace whose ‘bobo’ profile was arguably homologous to the demographics of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century New Age seekers who treat ‘Tantric sex’ as a consumer product” (xiii).

How extraordinarily blithe the tone is in its certainty that tenth century Kashmiris were no different than today’s American New Agers! In one fell swoop, White tries to pull down one of the greatest thinkers of ancient India to the level of a New Age guru.² If he was such a new age guru, how curious that Kalhana, the Kashmiri historian never even mentions Abhinavagupta and most writings from that time disparage Tantra.³ But with such high academic certainties, all protestations by Indians, scholars or otherwise, some, quite unsurprisingly, nationalistic and puritanical, could be dismissed with disdain. While the so-called “West” has produced many remarkable scholars, its hegemonic position in Indic studies has often invalidated indigenous perspectives and the ascending empires have reserved the exclusive right to read

² I learned that students in religion departments these days write papers like “Buddha as a Deadbeat Dad,” another curious example of mixing times and cultures, but the effects aren’t the same for what a young student does and what a respected scholar does.

³ See *The Doctrine of Vibration* by Mark Dyczkowski, who discusses Kashmiri society in the eleventh century (14-15).

"the other" in their own terms. As Gayatri Spivak argues: "Every definition or description of culture comes from the cultural assumptions of the investigator. Euro-US academic culture, shared, with appropriate differences, by elite academic culture everywhere, is so widespread and powerful that it is thought of as transparent and capable of reporting on all cultures" (9).

Fortunately, various contemporary shades of critical thought often put under the umbrella term post-modern, show convincingly that such hegemonies are neither transparent nor quite capable of reporting on others. Post-modernism, for all its faults, has been teaching us that objectivity after all is a sham, and even history is more the story of who writes it and "his" perspective, and less about any of its truth value. To come to the bottom of Tantra, White primarily uses historical methodologies now almost outdated in favour of the Nietzschean genealogical method that Foucault revived, which "rejects the traditional hermeneutic view that, through historical investigation, one can return to and discover the primordial essence of things" (Green 127-28). Most of the assumptions behind the methodologies employed by White, including Freudian psychoanalysis, which Doniger finds a constant presence in the *Kiss*, have been under serious critique within Western academia, which is far from monolithic in spite of its imperial persona.

While all Indic knowledge had become the purview of Western academia by the curious logic, that only an outsider/coloniser can truly understand what the insider/colonised

thinks, believes and writes, by the same logic in the capitalist system of ownership, the treasure house of Indic knowledge effortlessly moved into the hands of those who claimed superior rational methods. The entry into the halls of academia of various "others," including women of all hues and shapes, has forced a classical discipline like anthropology to critique its methodologies and the anthropological gaze is slowly being reversed. But it is no surprise that what is a doubtful method within the West can continue to be employed with impunity when it comes to reading far-off cultures, and things *are* rather slow when it comes to what is known as Indology. In conjunction with "objective scientific inquiry," somewhere in the history of Indic studies, the turn towards the etic perspective has had far-reaching and decisive outcomes. In the classic, time-tested colonial mode of robbing people of their material and intellectual treasures, the "etic" perspective was given greater legitimacy: it simultaneously shifted the intellectual capital of Indic learning to Western academic institutions and created "inferior" natives and their quaint ways under the "superior" colonial gaze. But the "native informant" no longer wishes to remain the unreliable narrator waiting to be "interpreted" and "analysed" by "objective" methodologies.

Since power structures shift, new elites with the ability to assert their decolonising voices attempt to rupture hegemonic institutions in their exclusive production and dissemination of knowledge, but the subalterns remain

locked in their world of local beliefs and practices; *shastrartha* after all remains an intellectual game played by a few. In India, though, because of what A. K. Ramanujan calls the "permeable membranes"⁴ between folk and classical traditions, the differences between elite and subaltern practices are rather thin. As White finds out, "*all* Hindus, whether they be benighted villagers or dazzling urbanites, worship *Sasthi* on the sixth day after childbirth" (40), which in some ways contradicts his own argument that there is a radical difference between subaltern low practices and its elite counterparts in high Tantra.⁵ If we accept any assumptions about a drastic difference between elite and non-elite as White seems to do, we assume that the folk practices from which Tantra arose were devoid of enlightenment, thereby clearly creating an elitist reading of class basis for spirituality. What Abhinava and the literate tradition are doing is making sense of and giving textual life to a fundamentally oral tradition, White's pun on "orality" notwithstanding. Any reading of the Shakta Tantric tradition will show that one's class position has nothing to do with one's ability to enter into supreme communion with the Great Goddess. In human history theorising always follows the original, often poetic, revelation; it rarely supercedes the experiential.

With this, let us now look closely at the cover of White's book, one of those notorious Khajuraho images that will immediately lure whole crowds of the "benighted Western public" in search of Tantric sex, whom he presumably wants to save. Once they order the book via Amazon and pay \$43 plus shipping, they will be seriously disappointed because to get through this densely academic and in many ways admirable work is no joke, and the book provides no access to Tantric bliss. Chapter 4 reproduces the image and explains its relevance, but I found it quite telling that the *yantra* over the image on White's cover presumably signifies his ability to decode the secret. But there is extremely important information that White himself provides – the *yantra* that is revealed over the erotic image on White's cover was originally meant to be hiding behind the love scene. The *Shilpa-prakash*, a ninth- to twelfth-century work on architecture that White cites, was written by Ramachandra Kulacara, surely a Kaula worshipper. From the Tantric architect's perspective, it is the *yantra* that is to be hidden: "This *yantra*, which was to be *concealed* by a love scene carved over it, was a required fixture on temples dedicated to Siva or Rudra" (96). So while White is ostentatiously revealing the "secret" by showing the *yantra* below, all that is

⁴ See Flaherty, *Tales of Sex and Violence: Folklore, Sacrifice and Danger in the Jaiminiya Brahmana* [900 BC], where she uses Ramanujan's definition and says "permeable membranes" "demarcate not only structure and antistructure in India, but within this division, the Great and the Little Tradition and their further subdivisions" (11).

⁵ See Harsha Dehejia who, discussing this issue of little and great tradition, disagrees with the implication that "the folk tradition does not contain any sustained metaphysical ideas" because it "gives strong hints and subtle signs of a sophisticated world-view, albeit not in a systematic and didactic manner" (8).

happening is exactly what the sculptor intended. We know from human experience that most people will ignore the unattractive geometric lines and go directly for the titillation of the image! So all these provocative images are used to hide the real secret! What White is trying to do in the book is to reveal a secret, "the hard core" sexual practices of the yoginis as the real marker of Tantra which has never been the secret at all. *Chakras* and *maithuna* rituals have been quite well-known throughout both elite and subaltern circles as he himself finds out in the course of his extensive research.

Human beings have always been fascinated by codes and lately American popular culture is enamoured of trying to bust the Da Vinci Code, another pointer to the suppressed Feminine. But code-breaking and myth-busting are always accompanied by recoding or encoding a substitute to take the place of the busted one. Language is a labyrinth and academia enjoys a privileged position in this endeavour of entering and recreating labyrinthine structures; often, academic game-playing includes cracking a code and then encoding an apparently more "rational" one. And if it is about the study of religions, and the religions of weirder people, the fun of code-breaking is even greater. *The Kiss of the Yogini* belongs to the same genre and the pleasure of finally figuring out the Tantric code is palpable in the subtext of the book. Finally the rational West can fully comprehend the dark corners of the irrational East!

There is one problem: since *Mahamudra* is self-secret, one may be shouting out the secret from the rooftop, and it is everywhere quite openly to be seen, people will still not see it, or see through a glass darkly or through a mirror they themselves have created. There is no secret except the veil one wears that bars one's entry into the sacred. But all such comments may smack of that famous irrationality and "mysticism" of the East, which is at once alluring and repellent. It is quite telling that in two instances when White, in his sweeping discussion of sexual fluids and demonic females, finds evidence that hints at something loftier, he attributes it to the Greeks. In light of Thomas McEvilley's challenging book *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* that exposes radical prejudices in the self-construction of the rational West vis-à-vis the irrational East, I will discuss in detail White's discussions of *grahas* and subtle bodies.

So important was reason to Enlightenment Europe that anything that smacked of irrationality had to be relegated to the Orient. McEvilley shows that in later Western readings, even Plato was not quite Greek enough as he was consigned along with Pythagorean and Orphic traditions to the influence of the irrational Orient.⁶ He points out quite trenchantly the difficulty associated with the findings that Sanskrit, the ancient language of the colonised Indians, was the mother of European languages, markers of racial

⁶ See Antonio de Nicolas' review article "Remembering Kali," based on my book for a discussion of Plato and the Indic tradition

supremacy. I will show the persistence of the same deep-rooted attitudes in White's comments. Continuing his discussion of blood-thirsty, baby-snatching and baby-eating "mothers," in Chapter 2, White explains how the *Skanda*-Seizers (*graha* = seizer) vanished from the scene. These are referred to as the *navagrabas* or nine planets in *Susruta Sambhita*, but he chooses to translate *grahas* as seizers because planetary deities only emerge "in the middle of the first millennium of the common era, in the wake of the importation of Greek astronomical knowledge to India" (60). What is extraordinary is that in his note numbered 214, he tries to refute *Atharva-Vedic* references, obviously much older, to *grahas* that will upset his neat reading of flying birds, flying yoginis: "The AV (19.9.7) mentions the *grahas* moving in the sky: however, there is no basis for determining that it is planets rather than birds that are intended here" (289)!

When, in Chapter 6, White's discussion reaches the consorts of the yoginis, the male *siddha* practitioners, who, of course, with higher abilities are able to internalise and theorise the "entire cosmic egg into the subtle body microcosm," White concludes: "It is tantalizing to note that the prototype for this Hindu body of theory and practice – of both the 'logic of projection' and 'inner' travel to 'higher' worlds – may have been Greek. The notion of the spinal column as a channel for semen and seminal thoughts (*logoi spermatikoi*)

was both a medical and a mystical notion dear to the Stoics" (187).

McEvilley too explores this idea in great length in his chapter on "Plato and Kundalini" and examines a whole body of evidence that such practices permeated Mesopotamian, Harappan, as well as Taoist traditions, rooted perhaps in African ways of deep antiquity, concluding: "Indeed, when one reflects briefly on the antiquity of marrow cults, known as early as Homo Erectus, this Greek-Indian parallel seems to direct the gaze into the darkest depths of human prehistory" (220). There is only one problem with White's reference to this: if the idea of Kundalini as an internal force existed in all these ancient cultures, his main argument that in the tenth century, Abhinava and company scholasticised and masculinised⁷ the yogini cults by turning them into an internal energy rather than mere external ritual, falls flat on its face.

The fact is it is not possible to read the Tantric tradition and its origin in any monolithic way as the collection *Roots of Tantra* shows. In India and in what is South Asia now, a fundamentally polycentric civilisation, many diverse traditions flourished at the same time – high, low, middle – all forms of religiosities simultaneously coexisted as a continuous process. Whether kings and yogis practiced the Tantras to acquire material power or those truly searching for liberation found the Tantric path more suitable to their temperaments – *bhukti* and *mukti* both

⁷ In India the struggle to unseat the Mother God never quite succeeded as it did in other parts of the world, but patriarchal appropriation and suppression of the feminine do remain an integral part of at least the ascetic brand of Indic thought.

being legitimate goals for people at different stages in their karmic journey – there was one element that they all had to contend with: its radical Gynocentrism. I now will briefly touch upon this puzzling phenomenon, which I have discussed extensively in my book. I posited in my reading of Kali, the cardinal centre of Shakta spirituality, that as the Supreme Brahman, the Great Goddess in her many forms, and the Tantric tradition whose presiding deity she is, whether Shaiva, Shakta, Vaishnav, Bauddha or Jaina, solved the age-old problem of transcendent and immanent godhead. Within what I called a Samkhya, Yoga, Tantra continuum there is a resolution of the fundamentally problematic division between body and spirit, the most insidious dualism giving rise to androcentric ascetic attitudes that relegate women to mere flesh.

While duality had to be posited in order to realise non-duality in the long history of the Indic intellectual tradition, which is not about some flattened sameness, Tantric dualities are joyful; the dance of Shiva and Shakti is at the very heart of Kali's Lila. Dancing dualities are radically different from battling dualities, the hallmark of binary and hierarchical opposition that characterise a major portion of Western philosophical dualism. In White's work, women appear either as dominating, malevolent, bloodthirsty and sex-hungry yoginis or witches out to eat or emasculate the poor male; on the other end of the spectrum are the poor exploited victims of powerful male yogis who use and abuse them as a piece of dirty cloth. The concept of *shakti* as the

subtle energy force permeating the universe and especially inhabiting the female body is an idea not easily understood by anyone, eastern, western, males or females, unless they have cleared the fields of their conditioned minds. I am not suggesting that one must be a Tantric to speak of it; as scholars like David Kinsley have shown, a more open attitude can yield a wealth of useful information.

Let me pose rhetorically a Nietzschean question: "Supposing truth is a woman – what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart? What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won – and today every kind of dogmatism is left standing dispirited and discouraged" (Preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* 192). In Tantra, especially Shakta Tantra, truth is a woman! Nietzsche would have felt quite at home in Tantra if he had had any real access to India's dancing gods and goddesses. A radically Gynocentric universe of religiosity is a difficult one even for the so-called insider, but it poses serious challenges to understanding when the psyche of the investigator is suffused with the Name of the Father. As Zimmer shows in his comparative examination of the sacred image and classical art, the use of "analytical procedure yields nothing that might

prove productive. If a critic's rambling descriptive catalogue should direct our attention to those features of a statue that are either more or less apparent ... then we will end up with a mere list of what is obviously present ... but the mere act of stock-taking does not reveal the wealth of meaningful relationships binding the image's parts, nor would our inventory expand to include those significant interconnections" (15). I will argue White's book provides a catalogue, albeit useful, but no real meaningful connections.

When it comes to Gynocentric worlds, which most esoteric traditions are, the trouble is manifold. After all who can believe that women have real power residing within their bodies and men have to work hard to awaken it by prostrating before females of all kinds and especially by following the instructions of a female guru? Also, it is even harder to believe that women can be agents of their own spiritual lives, not mere pawns in male hands.⁸ A quick look at the language used by practicing Tantrikas such as Madhu Khanna,⁹ Miranda Shaw, Suzanne Ironbiter¹⁰ and Julia Jean or Lama Yeshe and Daniel

Odier¹¹ will show that fundamental Tantric requirement of surrender to the female principle is the hallmark of Tantric tradition, not its "hard core" practices. Sexuality and more importantly female sexuality is not an easy fact to deal with under any circumstances, and cultures the world over have tried all kinds of ways to understand, transcend, and suppress it, or to deny it outright. The Indian ascetic tradition too has been full of ambivalence about it, but over all, the Indic tradition did not consider sexuality as fundamentally sinful and saw it as the very source of divine manifestation.

Such a culture is "weird" indeed and any effort to understand it through a lens clouded with ambivalence will produce strange results. First of all, let us look at the very use of the terminology "hard core" and "soft core:" coming straight out of another billion dollar industry on the Internet, as Julia Jean elaborated in a private conversation, it provides a kind of pornographic reference and undertone that continue to reinforce the exoticising aspects of Western depictions of Tantra that

⁸ Julia Jean drew my attention to a discussion in one of Miranda's Shaw's footnotes. She said in a conversation that a Gynocentric world-view is radical precisely because it takes seriously the belief/idea that women are the subjects of and agents in their own lives rather than the objects of others. See Shaw's footnote 48 on page 210 where she cites Renuka Singh's *The Womb of Mind*, and Indira Parikh and Pulin Garg's *Indian Women: An Inner Dialogue* as path-blazing works.

⁹ See Madhu Khanna's essays on a present day tantrika, Madhabi Maa and goddess woman equation. I also thank Madhu for our transatlantic conversation about Tantra.

¹⁰ See Suzanne's *Devi* for a powerful poetic rendering of Tantric reality. I want to thank Suzanne for all the conversations and her generosity in letting me access her fabulous library.

¹¹ Talking about the *dakini* Nigouma, companion and master of Naropa, Odier writes "To encounter such a being who wants nothing from you, who refuses nothing, who takes nothing, and who does not even want to lead you to liberation is the experience of all those who approach an authentic master" (91).

contribute to stereotypes of Tantra as debased and focussed on sexual excess.¹² But things are changing, however slowly. An essay titled "Weaving the Body of the Cosmos: Yantric Homologies at a Goddess Temple in Northeastern India" by Frederique Apffel-Marglin and Julia Jean is a clear indication of an entirely new paradigm that has been inaugurated by studies like *Passionate Enlightenment* by Miranda Shaw, which see the world of Tantra from what I have called a fundamentally Gynocentric perspective without any apologies. Talking about Tantric yoginis Shaw writes: "Consistent with its Hindu counterparts, Tantric Buddhism displays the conviction that all the powers of the universe flow through and from women. This affirmation of femaleness is a radical departure from the neutrality of Mahayana nondualism and clearly derives from the Shakta view of women as possessors of a special spiritual potency and as vessels and channels of the energy (*shakti*) that gives rise to life and well-being on all levels"(44).

Julia and Frederique's insightful analysis of the Cartesian invention of a biological body as a new kind of object that separated *res extensa* (the extended thing) and *res cognitas* (the thinking thing) points out the harmful effects this invention has had on women's lives since pre-modern Europe. Recognising the depth-psychological elements in Tantric traditions, many new studies are coming out that show the need for men to integrate the feminine within. In 1961 Alan Watts declared in *Psychotherapy East and West* that "psychology and

psychiatry are in a state of great theoretical confusion" and he interestingly argues that it is due to unconscious factors: "the psychotherapist carries on his work with an almost wholly unexamined 'philosophical unconscious.'" And he is ignorant of "the hidden metaphysical premises which underlie all the main forms of psychological theory. Unconscious metaphysics tends to be bad metaphysics." He then asks "What, then, if the metaphysical presuppositions of psychoanalysis are invalid, or if its theory depends on discredited anthropological ideas of the nineteenth century?" (19). Following such questioning, innumerable books have come out to question the grand narrative of psychoanalysis. Along with many feminist works such as *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* by Jessica Benjamin, Loren Pederson's book *Dark Hearts: The Unconscious Forces that Shape Men's Lives* scathingly criticises Freudian theories that have done serious harm to both men and women. And yet so many scholars that study women-centred Indic traditions fall for the easy equation of sex and psychoanalysis that fundamentally arose out of the Hebraic tradition where the Name of the Father reins supreme. In spite of their limitations, Jung and mythologists like Joseph Campbell were better equipped to study religious phenomena as they did not reduce it to mere pathology or mainly a male preoccupation.

Let me now return to the question of what is literal and what is not, and how

¹² I am thankful to Julia Jean for her very insightful comments and her sharing of her writings.

we can read something like the Christian Eucharist, Science – the prime authority for understanding reality for the strict rationalists – in its post-quantum phase no longer accepts any simple and naive empiricism as the methodology to reach truth; so when it comes to religious and especially what is known as inner revelations available to mystics, questions about what is literal and what is symbolic are simply the wrong questions to ask. The language of mythology, better understood by Jung¹³ and Campbell, needs to be learned, not as a bunch of myths/lies concocted by the primitive human imagination to explain what is not understood but as a dynamic expression of a deeper truth available to those of all times who are able to use what Sufi scholar Henri Corbin calls the “imaginal.” The language of the Tantric is the language of the imaginal, and so is the Eucharist, and this is no mystification, simply another language available to those who are willing to learn.¹⁴ Depth psychologists too, and great scientists as well, deal with phenomena that are not “observable” in any empirical sense. No one with any access to any kind of religious truth will conclude that the Christian Eucharist if taken literally will imply some form of cannibalism.

The dialogue within Christian communities about the meaning of communion – transubstantiation or

consubstantiation or complete rejection of the ritual – has its own history marking the problem of how to make sense of what is primarily a non-dual spiritual experience in which Christ’s body is the entire universe, and partaking of it is an inner experience of communion with him when the transcendent becomes immanent, spirit is flesh or vice versa. At that moment, time once again intersects with eternity and Jesus’ self-giving renders the worshipper, from my Hindu perspective, through the mantric utterance, into *amritasya putrah*, no longer a child of sin. I will now use the language of my esteemed Catholic friend and colleague Ralph Nazareth,¹⁵ who made an effort to communicate the meaning of the ritual in an e-mail and subsequent private conversation that is worth quoting in full:

When the words of the Lord (“This is my body...” etc.) are aspirated onto the communion host, it gets “transubstantiated” into the body and blood of Christ. Now, naturally, since to the empirical eye this doesn’t seem to be literally the case, it is to be understood as a religious reality one enters in and through faith. But the belief is that these elements of wheat and wine get actually transformed. There is the other, seemingly more reasonable position of consubstantiation which holds that the elements maintain their species

¹³ See June Singer who discusses the visible and invisible worlds and their relationship with science and psychology in her *Seeing Through the Visible World: Jung, Gnosis and Chaos*.

¹⁴ See de Nicolas’ essay on neurobiology for an understanding of current scientific findings and the language of mysticism.

¹⁵ I am deeply thankful to Ralph for our continuing dialogue about the nature of reality, spirituality, philosophy and religion.

integrity and that the transformation is a spiritual one. Even as I try to state it, simply, it is clear that this difference cannot be argued merely discursively. The language of metaphor, even as the language of myth, can be treacherous in dealing with matters of mysteries in faith. Myth and metaphor must always be used, while discussing these matters, as expansive arenas for the human imagination – (something that the secular and non-religious sensibility either cannot achieve or refuses to for its own reasons) – within which transformations take place that the “mind knows nothing of.”

In the case of flying yoginis, White does not think it should be taken literally, but all the rituals can be, as Doniger too points out – a discrepancy in her otherwise laudatory review. I personally do not see any problem with the rituals as they are structured differently for different people, those with the *adbikar* and those without. Sexual rituals can be found all over the world, and not all of them can be marked as Tantra. There are two conclusions that can be drawn from White's study: either there were and are powerful yoginis and their yogi disciples flying around, entering and exiting corpses or these are linguistic utterances to communicate some other experience. If the yogis were not actually acquiring the power of flight like the flying yoginis/birds, why were they submitting to such cruel and “repulsive” rituals?

I will prefer Abhinavagupta's explanation of the word *Khecari* (one who roams the skies/space) in his *Vivarana* commentary explicated by Jaidev Singh: “*Khecari* is the

Consciousness-power that moves about on the plane of *bodha* or the universal Divine Consciousness” and its characteristics are “(1) thought-free (*avikalpa*) and (2) it is *purna* i.e. whole, complete, undivided, unconditioned, integral.... *Khecari*, therefore, is the *shakti* that pertains to this plane of consciousness ... ‘one who does not have the experience of that level does not have the experience of *khecari*, because his consciousness moves about in *abodha* which is only objective-external like blue colour or jar or cloth, or internal like pleasure, pain etc.’ *Abodha* in this context is a technical term meaning empirical consciousness.... Since the empirical consciousness is determined, conditioned by ‘blue’, etc., therefore it is not *purna*, not integral, not unconditioned. The consciousness of *khecari* level alone is unconditioned and hence *purna* or whole in itself” (*Paratrisika* 7).

Arthur Avalon would understand this, not simply because he inhabited the embodied Tantric tradition, but perhaps because, in his nom de plume, the British officer Sir John Woodroffe identified with the great pre-modern goddesses of Britain that roamed or flew around the plains of Avalon until rational witch-hunts put an end to their freedom; remnants of their presence can still be seen in the ruins of their temples in modern Glastonbury as well as in the new mythologies being created in the comic books and fantasy stories of the young.

To conclude, David Gordon White's book could be an interesting addition to human knowledge if read cautiously, but his dramatic conclusions about

Abhinavagupta will not satisfy any serious scholar of Tantra and scholars of Kashmir Shaivism in particular, even if we ignore the practitioners themselves. His terminology betrays the orientalist attitude that he presumably wants to avoid by aligning with the subaltern. Since Gynocentric traditions are not easily understood from either insider or outsider perspectives, only more speaking voices of women,

Eastern and Western, will change the dominant paradigm. At present most Tantric studies remain caught in the funhouse mirror of their own creation, and they ignore the most important aspect of these traditions: inner transformation. But in the big picture of Devi's Maya such measuring/dissecting of a tradition in its bits and pieces, as White's *Kiss* quite skillfully does, too has its own place.

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Vakrokti and Dhvani: Controversies about the Theory of Poetry in the Indian Tradition¹

Bimal Krishna Matilal

Tattvam śālamkārasya kāvyatā

Kuntaka 1.6

Poetryhood consists in ornamentation (of speech)²

SANSKRIT KAVYA, FROM EARLY days, had two main theories of poetry. One theory regarded *alamkara*, the embellishment of speech and its meaning – alliteration, paronomasia, and the like (*śabdalamkara*) on the one hand, and simile, metaphor, and so on (*arthalamkara*) on the other – as an external means of beautifying speech. Underlying this theory is the analogy that likens a piece of poetry to the human body, to which *alamkara* would be added to enhance its beauty. This body-metaphor itself suggests several other things. For one, it accepts the body as the “body unornamented,” beautiful in itself. This has led to the well-known controversy about *svabhāvokti* – that even unadorned speech, a natural description or an unembellished description of nature would constitute poetry. As a later *Alamkarika* has said, *analamikṛti punaḥ kvāpi* (Mammata, *Kavyaprakasha* 1.4).

The other point is that the body needs life or a soul in order to appear beautiful. The question then is: what constitutes that soul, or as they put it, *sarirīn rasa*, aesthetic rapture, say later writers. But obviously, *rasa* here stands for that property of poetic expression by virtue of which such aesthetic enjoyment is evoked in the reader. All these later

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¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Leiden meeting of the World Sanskrit Conference in a panel on Sanskrit poetics (organised by the author himself). Another version was presented at a seminar of the Philosophy Department of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, in February 1988.

² This is my interpretative translation of what is one of Kuntaka's main theses.

views hang together with an earlier view that was fundamental: *alamkara* is a property external to *kavya*. Even Anandavardhana's superlative genius and insight did not find this position unsatisfactory.³

In fact Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta opened our minds further to a different aspect of poetry – to meanings that poems contain, but that are not explicitly “expressed” in them. This was the power of suggestivity, where a third (or even a fourth) power of the words was appealed to, besides their primary power of providing lexical meanings and their constructs, and the secondary or indicative power, of furnishing metaphorical meanings.

In fact, Abhinavagupta talks about three “well-recognised powers” or “functions” of words instead of two (*abhidha*, or the denotative, which gives the lexical meanings, and *lakshana*, or the indicative, which gives the metaphorical sense). In this, he seems to follow the Bhatta view of *abhihitānvaya* “(syntactic) connection after designation.” According to this view, there is another power besides the “denotative” and the “indicative,” called *tatparya shakti*, by virtue of which the isolated word-meanings given by the *abhidha* are connected together to generate a connected whole, the sentence-meaning. Having described these three powers, Abhinava says that suggestivity or *dhvani* is the fourth power or function (cf. *caturthyām tu*

kakṣāyām dhvanana-vyāpāra, *Lochana*, under 1.4). This is summed up as follows:

Therefore this is the fourth function distinct from the three, *abhidha*, *tatparya* and *lakshana*. It is understood from the designation of such and other terms: *dhvanana*, *dyotana*, *vyanjana*, *pratyayana*, *avagamana*. (*Lochana*, under 1.4)

Poetry, according to Ananda, must “mean” more than it says. And if what it “shows,” i.e., the suggested sense, exceeds (*atishaya*) – is more attractive or more beautiful than the expressed sense – then it constitutes a better variety of poetry. Ananda defines *dhvani* and argues in the *vritti* that the “suggested” sense must be dominant over the expressed sense (*vacyārtha*) in order that the piece of composition be the proper locus of *dhvani* (Uddyota 1, verse 13, and the three *saṃgrāha śloka*s under it).

Abhinava carefully distinguishes the suggested emotive meaning of the poetic composition from the “indicative” metaphorical extension of the word's meaning. The metaphorical extension of the word-meaning is forced upon us (all hearers or readers) when the lexical meaning of two words forming a sentence do not “fit,” as in “the village is on the river,” or “Newcastle-upon-Tyne.” The word “river” by metaphorical extension should mean here “the river-bank.” Abhinava says: *mukhyārtha-bādhāyām lakṣaṇāyāḥ prakṛptiḥ*, “*lakshana* arises if the primary

³ See the *Dhvanyaloka* (second Uddyota, verses 17-19), especially: *Alamkāro hi bāhyalamkārasāmyad aṅginas cārutva-hetur ucyate* (under verse 17). Also see *vivakṣā*, *tatparatvena nāṅgitvena kadācana* (verse 18 ab).

meanings are obstructed" (*Lochana*, under 1.4). The suggested emotive meaning or the poetic meaning flashes in the mind of the sensitive reader only after the literal or ordinary meaning of the sentence has been fully comprehended. Here the condition, i.e., the lack of fitness ("misfitting" = *ayogyata*), for which the service of *lakshana* or metaphorical extension is required, is conspicuous by its absence.

Ananda was more concerned with the emotive meaning of poetry – poetry being evocative of aesthetic pleasure in the sensitive reader. When emotions are "suggested" (i.e. evoked obliquely), the beauty is all the more enhanced, and the aesthetic rapture excels. *Alamkaras* and their ilk can only be subservient to this evocation of aesthetic enjoyment, called *rasa*.

The second theory, however, regarded *alamkara* as a natural or essential property of poetry. I have deliberately left *alamkara* untranslated here. *Alamkara* does not simply mean "ornament." An ornament is what "adds" to beauty (cf. *alam karoti*). However, it may mean more than that. *Alamkara* may be an "essential part" of the beauty itself. Vamana inadvertently got this right in the first section of his first chapter. He used the term *alamkara* in two distinguishable senses. In one, *alamkara* stands for beauty or beautification in general. He says, *kāvyaṃ grāhyam alamkāṛāt*, "poetry is understood to be attractive to us because of *alamkara*" (KASV 1.1.1), and *saundaryam alamkāṛaḥ*, "*alamkara* means beauty" (KASV 1.1.2). Etymologically the word may mean beautification or

making something beautiful (for *alam* = *bbushana*; as the lexicographer says: *alam bhūṣaṇa-paryāpti-śakti-vāraṇa-vācakam*). But another sense is also obtainable when we derive the word in the instrumental case: that which beautifies (cf. *alam kriyate anena*). Then it will refer to the usual items: simile, alliteration, etc.

Bhamaha, who was also aware of the second view, defended it explicitly. He implicitly accepted that *alamkara* constitutes the nature of poetry. This consists in the composition of speech and its meaning in an "oblique" (*vakra*) manner. It is not only what you say but also how you say it. He asserts that the embellishment of speech consists in the oblique composition of words and the oblique presentation of meaning (KA 1.6). In Bhamaha's slightly loose terminology, *vakrokti* = *atishayokti* = *alamkara*. He says that in all *alamkara* there is *vakrokti* or "strikingness in speech" (KA 2.85). *Vakrokti* thus means strikingness in word and meaning. *Atishayokti* means a non-standard way of speech, something that is not ordinary or run-of-the-mill, but speaks of a meaning that excels (KA 2.81, 84, 85). In this vein, he rejects the idea that a *varta*, a plain report such as "The sun has set, the moon is up, birds go to their nests" can constitute poetry (KA 2.87). Some scholars (Raghavan, etc.) have said that this is not a rejection of *varta*. But I believe it is. Dandin retorted, quoting the same example, that this would be good poetry provided it suggests a special time or state. Dandin's argument leaves no doubt that some *alamkarikas* did reject *varta*. Much later, Mammata

argued that the words constituting the example of *varta* may suggest (to different types of persons) at least nine different meanings (see KA, ch. 5). The idea is that the said expression is highly suggestive and, if suggestivity constitutes good poetry, this would be good poetry. Bhamaha explicitly rejected *hetu*, *sukshma* and *lesa* on the ground that they do not consist in the obliqueness of speech (*vakrokti*). Talking about *svabhavokti*, Bhamaha hesitatingly says that some regard it (description of objects or events as they are *tadavasthatvam*) as an *alamkara*. This (*kecit* in Bhamaha) might have been a preliminary to the rejection of *svabhavokti*. Here Dandin rejoins by defining and illustrating three types of *svabhavokti* and arguing that this could be an *alamkara*. He argues that although "telling as it is" (= *svabhavokti*) is what dominates the *shastras*, i.e., philosophical or scientific treatises as opposed to *kavya*, poetry, it might be desirable (*ipshita*) in *kavya* too. In fact, Dandin clearly divides "poetic speech patterns" (*kavya*) into two: natural and oblique (KP 2.362). Hence, according to him, "telling it as it is" cannot be ignored in *kavya*; it does constitute an *alamkara* (Dandin, *Kavyadarsha*; see also Raghavan).

Anandavardhana quotes a verse composed by (according to Abhinava) Manoratha, a poet contemporary with Ananda, who argues that the so-called *dhvani* is a figment of the imagination of people of lesser intelligence (Uddyota 1, verse 1). It continues: stupid people praise a piece of poetry as full of *dhvani*, "suggestivity," when it does not contain

any meaning that pleases the mind; being devoid of *alamkara*, it does not consist of skillfully composed words and does not have any *vakrokti*. The mention of the word *vakrokti* here is significant. For if *vakrokti* were only a species of *alamkara*, it would not merit a separate mention. However, Manoratha may be referring to the view that regards *vakrokti* as the basis of all *alamkara*, as the essence of beautification in poetry. Abhinava's comment here is important.

Abhinava says that the word *alamkara* refers to the *arthalamkaras*, under which class come similes and the like, while *shabdalamkaras*, "skillfully composed words" refer to alliteration and so on. And *vakrokti* refers to the *gunas* pertaining to the sound and sense. In other words, *vakrokti* – *utkrishhta samghatana* – is the excellent arrangement of words and so on. This may refer to style or *riti*. Abhinava notes further that there is an alternative explanation of *vakrokti* as the common property of all *alamkara*. However, if we accept this sense, the fault of repetition cannot be avoided.

Now let us consider Kuntaka. He may have been the last, and in my view, the most determined, exponent of what P. V. Kane vaguely called the *alamkara* school (372-78), of which, according to him, Bhamaha was the "oldest extant exponent" (83). Philosophically speaking, Kuntaka was a holist and an essentialist. For him, the *alamkara*-1, as we shall call *shabdalamkara*, constitutes the very essence of poetry. And this is how he proves it. A *kavya* is something that a poet does or creates. What a poet makes is poetry. A poet makes

"ornamented speech." Ornamentation consists in introducing obliqueness or strikingness in speech such that it will delight the reader and make him rejoice: *tad-vid-āhlāda-kārin* (VJ 1.7). Hence a piece of poetry = of a poet's making = ornamented speech. Thus poetryhood is ornamentation = introduction of obliqueness, uncommonness, non-banalities. Bhamaha's insight was right. In every *alamkāra* (call it *alamkāra-2*, for *arthalamkāra*, a term that denotes simile, metaphor, and so on) there is inherent obliqueness. This is what distinguishes poetry from ordinary speech, banal reports, newspaper reports and the like.

Kuntaka's holistic approach was explicitly influenced by Bhartrihari among the grammarians. He believed that the distinction between the *alamkāra* and the *alamkārya*, the "ornaments," and that which is being ornamented (remember the "body-metaphor"—a poem is like a body where ornaments are added for the sake of beauty) is totally artificial. The connection between them is one of inseparability. A poem is a whole; its beauty, or even the means for its beautification, cannot be separated from it. To put it in another way, if we take *alamkāra-1* out, remove it from poetic speech, then the speech loses its poetryhood (*kāvya*). A body, even a body where there is a soul, can remain as it is, without the beautifying ornaments. But a poem cannot remain a poem without the *alamkāra* (= ornamentation = the poet's making = *kavikarma*). This follows from the very comprehensive definition of *alamkāra* as *kavikarma*. In fact, it is wrong or misleading to equate

alamkāra-1 with what is known in the West as a figure of speech in a formal scheme. Even Abhinava indirectly endorses Kuntaka's view of *alamkāra-1* as the special charm invested in the composition by the poet's imagination.

Now the question that unavoidably arises, one that is usually raised against any holistic framework, is: how are we supposed to study and analyse the *alamkāra* in the second sense, i.e., *alamkāra-2*, which activity constitutes the proper subject matter of *alamkāraśāstra*? How are we supposed to discuss and classify similes, metaphors, alliterations and the like? Kuntaka turns to Bhartrihari for the answer. Indeed, for Bhartrihari, and for the Sanskrit grammarian, a sentence is an unbreakable, impartite whole. But how then are we supposed to study words, their formation out of roots and affixes and so on, which constitutes the proper subject matter of grammar? Bhartrihari answers this question by referring to what he calls the *apoddhara* method (VP, kanda 2, verse 10). We follow the method of extraction and abstraction. We apply this method and operate it upon the given reality, a whole sentence. We reach individual words, and individual roots or suffixes through abstraction. We "artificially" constitute or create in this way words, roots and suffixes, the subject-matter of our study in grammar. The word "artificially" means that they lack "givenness" or that their existence is a borrowed one. Thus Bhartrihari and the other holists try to drive the point home by saying that the whole is real while the parts thereof are not, for they are constructs or abstracted

bits. The natural home of a word is the sentence in which it occurs. Kuntaka refers to this argument of the holist, and on the basis of this analogy, explains that although the *alamkara* and the *alamkarya* are inseparable, and constitute a whole, a distinction is made by the *apoddhara* method, only because it is instrumental (*upaya*) to our study and understanding of the nature of poetry, which constitutes the proper subject matter of *alamkarashastra*. The so-called *alamkaras*, the simile and so on, are therefore "artificially" abstracted from pieces of poetry much as the words are abstracted from the sentence. These *alamkaras* have only borrowed existence. They essentially belong to poetry and outside of poetry they have no *locus standi*. The expression "a *gayal* is like a cow" is in this way not a case of *alamkara* (although there is a simile) for it is not a piece of poetry. Similarly, the expression "There is a fire on the hill because there is smoke" would not be a case of *hetu alamkara*, although a reason is being assigned here, because it is a bland statement without any tinge of obliqueness or beauty. Kuntaka explains *apoddhrtya* as *nikershya*, i.e., *prthak prthag avasthāpya*, "extracting, putting them separately (in awareness)." He further glosses *yatra samudāyārūpe taylor antarbhāvas tasmād vibhajya* as analysing or dividing them from the whole in which they inhere. The main point here is to understand the instrumental nature of this division. Every holist has to appeal to a form of instrumentalism as regards the extracted parts. Thus, Kuntaka was no exception (cf. *tad-upāyatayā*).

From what has now been said, we may still doubt whether Kuntaka was really a believer in *Alamkara* theory, or to use Kane's expression, an exponent of the *Alamkara* school. For, according to this theory, as I have already noted, the "body-metaphor," along with its various implications, should be given up and the metaphor of the whole and "naturalness" (essentiality or inseparableness) of *alamkara* in poetry should be emphasised. The individual *alamkaras* do seem to be separable as a necklace is separable from the neck or the body. Kuntaka dispels this doubt in no uncertain terms:

This is the ultimate meaning (*paramartha*) here: poetryhood, that is the poet's making, belongs to something that is existent (*satah*), where all parts have vanished into a whole (i.e. an impartite whole, *nirasta-sakalavayava*) and which has *alamkara* (as its essential constituent). Thus, the thesis is: poetryhood belongs to that which has *alamkara*, "ornaments," and it is not the case that *alamkara* are added to or connected (*yoga*) with, the poem. (VJ, *vritti* under ch. 1, verse 6)

This is Kuntaka's thesis, which may be set forth as follows: (1) Obliqueness (*vakrata*) in speech underlies or pervades all *alamkara*. (2) There cannot be any poem without such an *alamkara*. (3) Therefore obliqueness in speech constitutes poetry.

And his argument is: (4) If poetry is what a poet makes, then we know that the poet makes or creates or introduces the required obliqueness in the middle of plain or banal expressions. Therefore,

obliqueness = the property of being made by the poet = poetryhood.

I shall now develop a critique of this thesis, which will include some traditional criticisms and some new ones.

(1) Dandin hit the nail right on the head when he argued that even the plain expression "the sun has set, the moon is up, etc." can be part of some poetical composition in a suitably chosen context. This was promptly picked up by the later Dhvani theorists (for example, Mammata), as I have noted earlier. The problem is that banality or plainness in the composition of words and sounds does not imply plainness in meaning. Meaning is given by the context and the poet may of course use plain words in order to generate profoundly charming meaning. Kuntaka might have answered the charge as follows. Obliqueness in "meaning" (*artha*) is also a constituent of poetry. Kuntaka explicitly states that:

Although many other words are there (to convey the same meaning), the (poetic) word is what uniquely conveys the sole meaning intended by the poet. The meaning is what beautifully vibrates and charms the hearts of the sensitive reader. Both (word and meaning) are ornamented. This ornamentation of both is said to be the obliqueness in speech, a masterly way of speaking.

(VJ, verses 1.9-10)

In other words, Kuntaka could absorb Dandin's criticism and turn the counterexample into a proper example covered by his definition of poetry. His intention was to distinguish the ordinary mode of speech, or the cart

drivers' language (*shakatika-vakya*), from poetic language. But the point is that even the cart drivers' plain or vulgar language can be invested with beauty or obliqueness by setting it in an appropriate context. For example, in the Vishkambhaka in *Abhijnanashakuntala*, the fisherman's as well as the policeman's plain and rough and ready speech became part of an excellent *drishyakavya*. In short, we all know that the plain man's speech must be distinguished from *kavya* but the element of contextuality makes a wholesale or blanket rejection of the plain man's speech impossible.

(2) A *svabhavokti*, as Dandin insisted, may be simply a graphic description and indeed be a piece of good poetry. Two well-known examples are often cited: one from *Abhijnanashakuntala*: *grīvabhangābhirāmam*, etc. The other is *yah kaumārābharah* etc. Kuntaka seems to tackle this objection in verses 1.11-15. First, if the word *svabhavokti* means a description of the "nature" (*svabhava*) of the object or event, then any description can be such a description, for what else can we describe, besides describing some "nature" of the objects? If such a description is an *alamkara* "ornament," what is it that is being ornamented here? Second, an object that lacks *svabhava* would be a fictitious object, a non-object, and in fact it would be indescribable, ineffable. Objects are denoted by words on the basis of their having some "nature" or other. Hence any possibility of description in language implies description of "nature" (*svabhavokti*). Third, since one cannot

climb upon one's own shoulder, the "body" of a poem, the "nature" (*svabhava*) to be described, cannot ornament or adorn itself. Kuntaka's argument is somewhat *a priori*. It is a dialectic based upon what is meant by *svabhavokti* and what it is to be an *alamkara*.

But the underlying point is probably that the "body" metaphor, as well as the externalist view of *alamkara* that goes along with it, is open to serious attack. The opponent, in calling *svabhavokti* an *alamkara*, has made his externalist position stand on its head, for the duality of *alamkara* and *alamkaryā* collapses.

(3) We should note that the well-known verses of Kalidasa or Shila-bhattarika, which are cited as examples of *svabhavoktialamkara*, can be easily regarded as pieces of high-class poetry even by a follower of Kuntaka. It is not difficult to discover why such verses are charming to us and wherein lies the mastery of the poetic art (*kaver vyaparāḥ*) that introduces strikingness in the expression. So the dispute here is not about the *lakṣhyas* or *definienda*, but about the defining or distinguishing characteristic itself (*lakṣhana*). Is it the obliqueness in speech? or the profundity in the suggestiveness? or the aesthetic rapture that it generates in the sensitive reader? Kuntaka opts for the first.

(4) Most critics of Kuntaka, traditional as well as modern, accuse him of being much too engrossed with the exteriors of poetry. This is to be distinguished from what I have called the externalist view above. The "externalist view," in my opinion, is that which regards *alamkara* as the external, and hence, in principle,

separable, properties of *kavya*. Some early *alamkarikas* seem to have upheld such a view. Kuntaka rejected it. But critics charge that Kuntaka was concerned only with the exterior of poetry, with *alamkara*, *guna*, *riti*, *dosha*, etc. But this charge is unfounded. Kuntaka did not distinguish between the "exterior" and "interior." He was more concerned with the *vyapara*, "function," of the poet, which he also calls *kavi-kaushala*, with what it is that the poet does to the ordinary modes of speech (VJ 2.3, 4). He was seriously concerned with *pratibha*, the poetic genius or insight, that so-called "philosopher's stone" which by its mere touch turns iron into gold, ordinary banalities into poetic expressions.

(5) We can think of "three" main ways of approaching the study of poetry. One is by concentrating upon the beauty in the external appearance of poetry. The second is by concentrating upon the poet's power or activity. The third is by concentrating upon the pleasure in the aesthetic judgment, the enjoyment that a sensitive reader derives from poetry. The first route was taken by the old (*chirantana*) *alamkarikas*. The second was taken by Kuntaka. The third by Bhattanayaka. Anandavardhana no doubt followed the third route but created a new dimension in it. As the readers, especially sensitive readers, are suggestible, it is the power of suggestion of *rasa* or aesthetic pleasure found in poetic expressions that became the focus of Anandavardhana's attention. It is, of course, true that both Ananda and Abhinava were meticulously

conscious of the role of the poetic genius or *pratibha* in the composition of poetry. They made some of the important comments about *kavi-pratibha*. However, their attention was directed towards the sensitive readers, the *sabridayas*, for whom poetry is composed. Ananda says:

*lakṣye tu parīkṣamane sa eva
sabrīdaya-brīdayāhlādakāri kāvya-
tattvam.* (Uddyota 1, verse 13)

The essence of poetry is in the delight it imparts to the mind of the *sabridaya*.

Abhinava gives the best description of a *sabridaya*, "a sensitive reader:"

*yeṣāṃ kāvyānuśīlanavaśād visadīkṛte
mano-mukure varṇanīya-
tanmayībhavana-yogyatā iti*

The sensitive readers are those whose mirror-like minds are made crystal clear by their constant practice of the reading of poetry in such a way that their minds become identified with whatever is described in poetry.

Even Kuntaka was aware of the need for sensitive readers for the proper appreciation of *kavya*. Apparently defining poetry, he says: *tad-vid-āhlāda-kāriṇi* (VJ ch. 1, verse 7). Here *tad-vid* = *sabridaya*. However, he emphasised the poetic talent – the second route.

Kuntaka, being well aware of the other two routes, was alone in following his own insight; he looked at poetry from the poet's point of view: the beautiful image is not simply a replica of what naturally exists. It is where "matter" is given "form" (compare his comment in verse 7: *tathāpi kavi-pratibhā-prauḍhir eva prādhānyena'*

vaṭiṣṭhate). Thus, it seems to be in line with one of the widespread conceptions of art in the West. Art is what gives "form" to "matter," it "adds" to nature, informs *byle* with *eidos*.

I shall conclude with an analogy used by Kuntaka himself. He believed that the poet's genius cannot be categorised. He called it *kimapi* or *ko'pi*. He compared the poet and his poetry-composition with the painter and his painting a picture. He brings it out nicely, while discussing *vakya-vakrata*:

The uncategorisable genius of the poet creates beauty just as a painter paints a picture using a charming canvas, different lines of measured length, colours and tones of different shades. (VJ 3.4)

He explains (I summarise):

The painter uses all those different items, none of which contain beauty, but his genius creates beauty out of ordinary things. The poet similarly uses different means, rhetoric and other qualities of word and meaning, style (*riti*), but real beauty does not reside in any one of them singly. It is created by the magic touch of the poet's own genius.

Kuntaka identified the function of writing poetry as introducing "obliqueness" so as to create beauty and please the sensitive readers. In this respect he differed from the old Alamkara school. He was aware of the theory about the suggestive power of poetry that was introduced by Ananda. But a follower of Kuntaka might argue that this takes us away from the poet, i.e., his poetic genius as well as his own

function, to the side of the readers and why and how they enjoy poetry. It is the reader who is suggestible. But the mysterious creation of beauty must be as important as the experience or enjoyment of beauty. Kuntaka intended to show an alternative way of critically appreciating poetry. Instead of looking for poetic words and expressions that suggest meanings that evoke emotions of love and suchlike in the readers, one can concentrate on the wonderful workmanship of the poetic genius that makes poetic expressions and poetic meanings totally inseparable from each other, where beauty consists in their wholeness. It is rather unfortunate that the later Sanskrit tradition ignored it. It

was, no doubt, the unavoidable influence of Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta that eclipsed the glory and genius of Kuntaka. Perhaps, the philosophical leaning of the *rasa-dhvani* theory won the day. Poetics was taken over by philosophers who dealt with the philosophy of awareness and the philosophy of language. In this context Kuntaka's voice was a lone voice. His approach was that of an artist towards the study of poetry, the approach that looks upon art that adds form to matter, invests *bhū* with *eidōs*, creates beauty out of straightforward natural speech tinged with obliqueness: poetryhood consists in beautification, *tattvaṃ sālankāśya kāvya*.

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The Social Aesthetic and Sanskrit Literary Theory¹

Sheldon Pollock

SCHOLARSHIP ON SANSKRIT LITERARY theory, like Sanskrit scholarship more generally, tends to cleave to the intellectual agenda set by the tradition itself. There are good reasons for this conformism, of a historical-anthropological sort: if we are to make sense of Sanskrit culture we need to know in the first instance what the Sanskrit tradition itself thought worth knowing. Thus, if Indology has been indifferent to the social and moral imagination of Sanskrit literary texts – throughout this essay I will take the social and the moral as forming a unified sphere of knowledge in premodern India – it is in part because the *śāstric* tradition has not thematised it in any pronounced way. To be sure, poets as early as Asvaghosha, literary theorists starting with Bhamaha, commentators from Arunagiri on may describe the purposes of literary discourse as the formation of moral persons – *vyūtpatti* or education in the largest sense – but they provide little in the way of strong argument or analysis to ground their claim.² In terms of sheer column inches, the topic is certainly the least discussed of any in *sahityashastra*. We might highlight this point by contrasting the understanding of *vyūtpatti* in medieval India with another highly consequential intellectual value of antiquity, *paideia*. Both were ideally based on a tripartite knowledge: a *vidyatraya* of *vyākaraṇa*, *mīmāṃsa*, and *nyāya* in the first case, a *trivium* of

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² *Saundarananda* 18.63-64 (*kāvyavyājena tattvam*, etc.); *Kavyālamkāra* 1.3 (*dharmārthakāmamokṣeṣu vaicakṣaṇyam*); Arunagirinatha's *Prakashika* (twelfth century?) on *Kumarasambhava* 8.92 (TSS ed. 327: *evam nānāvidhātra prabandhe puruṣārthavyūtpattir bhavati*).

grammatica, *rhetorica*, and *dialectica* in the second. It is the middle term here that marks a large difference in these otherwise strikingly similar (and in fact almost contemporaneous) systematisations:³ Indian literati were trained in the science of discourse analysis (*vakyashastra*, as *mimamsa* is often called), European literati in the arts of persuasion, especially forensic persuasion. *Mimamsa*, developed to enhance the understanding of the Vedas, teaches the conditions of meaning to philosophers of language; *rhetorica*, which emerged largely out of the Sophist movement and its complex democratic politics, means to shape behaviour on the part of people acting in the world. The one conceives of literature as verbal icon, the other as exhortation. And it was the analysis of literature as a specific kind of language use that truly came to engage the interests of the Sanskrit readers (the ones we know most about, commentators and literary theorists), or better put, the orientation that produced the most influential kinds of reading. Beyond that, such readers were concerned at the theoretical level with literary experience not as a form of social knowledge but as a form of abstraction

from, even transcendence of, the social by way of aesthetic self-transcendence. According to Sanskrit literary theory – or, at least, according to usual interpretation of this theory – one does not ultimately *learn* anything specific to the reading of Sanskrit literature from the reading of Sanskrit literature. True knowledge as such belongs, axiomatically, to the domain of *shastra*, social and moral knowledge in particular to the domain of *dharmashastra*.

It may not be entirely accurate, however, to say that medieval readers understood Sanskrit literature according to the model just described, and it is almost certainly not a trans-historical predisposition of Indian culture to understand it that way. On the contrary, it seems to me something of a new emphasis, even a new mentality produced in large part by the remarkable achievements of literary theory in Kashmir between 850–1050. In the case of the commentarial tradition, the precise impact of this transformation is a matter of some conjecture, since (and here is a fact not often registered) we have no scholia on Sanskrit literary texts before this period.⁴ But the history of *sabityashastra* certainly corroborates this

³ Although in both cases the three forms of knowledge are ancient, it is only in the medieval period in India that *padavakyapramana* seems to become a disciplinary unit (perhaps first in the Bhavabhuti, early eighth century, see *Uttaramacharita*, 1 + in most mss.; from then on it is common, from e.g. Mukulabhatta, *Abhidhavarittimatrika* verse 13, to Nilakantha, colophon to MBh. 5.46 vulg.). The *trivium*, for its part, is a coinage of Alcuin's in the latter half of the eighth century.

⁴ The first extant commentarial writing is that of Prakashavarsha of Kashmir (fl. 950), who wrote a *Laghutika* on Bharavi's *Kiratarjuniya* (still unpublished). He was the teacher of Vallabhadeva, who produced the first widely-circulated commentaries on the courtly poems of Kalidasa and Magha (references to earlier scholia are found in inscriptions from the seventh century, e.g., the *tika* by King Durvinita of the western Gangas on the *chitrakavya* chapter of the *Kiratarjuniya*). Bhoja's *Sringaraprakasha*, in the generation after Vallabha, gives evidence throughout of an intense exegetical concern with the literary classics; he also refers to commentators on Bharavi and Kalidasa (667.9). The beginning of the second millennium witnesses the first flowering of commentaries in other traditions, too. Manakkutavar's commentary

assessment of the influence of the Kashmiri transformation. This was a complex shift, consisting in a range of new conceptual moves, but two of them were especially crucial. For one thing, this was the first time that *mimamsa* was directly appropriated by literary theory, signalling a far more intense concern than previously with *kavya* as a linguistic system.⁵ For another, whereas the relationship between *kavya* and religious values had often been a close one, literature for the first time came to be seen as a model or even kind of religious experience. Emblematic of this conceptual move is the redefinition of aestheticised emotion, *rasa*. In the same way that literary theory itself now became less prescriptive of the writing process and more descriptive of the reading process, the notion of *rasa* was radically displaced from text to reader. What had long been the defining question, how the literary artifact embodies human affect, was transformed into a question of reception, how the reader actually experiences this aestheticised emotion. The answer was found to lie in a close analogy with religious experience.⁶

The preoccupations of Kashmiri theorists with language philosophy and theology, which have coloured our understanding of the entire tradition, have preoccupied much of the most serious contemporary scholarship on

Sanskrit literary theory, again for very good reasons. Kashmiri theory was, after all, highly influential, and thoughtful students of Sanskrit – and Daniel Ingalls was pre-eminent among them – know that careful reading of the literature of others presupposes careful listening to others' theory. This is all the more true when this theory was some of the most sophisticated in antiquity and hardly equalled in modernity. The concentration on language philosophy and religion, however, was also reinforced by certain proclivities in the modern West, especially a pervasive indifference in Indology itself to the social in Sanskrit literary discourse. The reasons themselves for this indifference are complicated, but they include the character of the critical trends that dominated Western literary theory and philology during the formative period of Sanskrit literary studies (formalism and its progeny, and linguistics), the subservience of Sanskrit in the Western academy (as handmaiden to religious studies), the intellectual politics of Sanskritists themselves (predominantly conservative). One manifestation of such tendencies that many readers will recall is Ingalls' critique, largely justified if entirely subjective, of D. D. Kosambi's mechanical, Plenkanovian denunciation of the literary text he himself had so brilliantly and devotedly edited.⁷

on the *Tirukkural*, for example, which dates from the end of the tenth century, is the first known Tamil commentary devoted to a literary work.

⁵ The best account of the paradigm shift in literary theory in Kashmir and the role of *Mimamsa* is McCrea, 1997, especially Chapter 2. See also the discussion of authorial intentionality, and metaphor/metonymy in Pollock, in press.

⁶ For this argument, see Pollock, 1998.

⁷ Kosambi, 1957: xlv-lxii ('The analysis must therefore derive from the class divisions of every society in

I want to ask here whether we can historically recuperate the social in Sanskrit literary theory, and find ways to understand its significance as something other than a feature merely inside the text (a mere narrative addition, say, such as could be stripped from the pure textuality of the literary work), or merely outside (as the ideology of an exploitative class, for example). It is striking to observe, as I hope readers will agree we can observe, how fundamentally the social grounds Sanskrit literary theory, and yet at the same time how this grounding is often occluded in the theory itself. The treatment of two central problematics of *sahityashastra*, *dhvani* (aesthetic suggestion) and *rasa* or more particularly *rasabhāsa* (the invalid shadow of aestheticised emotion), illustrates this well: if *rasabhāsa* foregrounds sociality for theory, *dhvani* seems to hide it. I examine these in the first two parts of this paper, and in the third, I address a specific body of literary theory, Bhoja's early eleventh century masterpiece, the *Sringaraprakasha* (Light on Passion, SP). Here the social occupies a place in the conceptual scheme of Sanskrit literary culture very different from what we might be led to believe from most scholarly accounts of *sahityashastra*, and from the Kashmiri focal points, linguistic and theological, upon which they are based. If I disagree on occasion with Daniel Ingalls in my understanding of some of these issues, it is disagreement made possible only by the strong and serious arguments he

himself provided in his magisterial scholarly oeuvre. And that Bhoja's work is at last becoming available to us in a definitive edition is partly due to his long and distinguished work as editor of the Harvard Oriental Series.

Social Suggestion

At the beginning of his *Dhvanyaloka* (Light on Aesthetic Suggestion, DA), Anandavardhana makes a claim for scientific innovation that, viewed from a purely intellectual-historical perspective, is perhaps without precedent in India. He declares he intends to analyse a feature of literary speech that all sensitive readers grasp but that no one before him, because of its subtlety and complexity, has yet been able to theorise. Ananda's analysis of *dhvani* or aesthetic suggestion is remarkable both for the overall design of his argument and the subtlety of his exposition, and has rightly absorbed the attention of all who have studied his great work. But more pertinent for the present inquiry than what Ananda is concerned to theorise is what he is unconcerned to theorise. And this is an unconcern shared by all later writers, who in literary-critical texts over ten centuries following Ananda pondered his problems and the poems he adduced in illustration. If we reflect on what they omit from the sweep of their conceptualisation, what they fail to analyse that is patently required in order to understand *dhvani*, we begin to see at once how central social discourse is to

which literature was cultivated," etc.[lvii]; Ingalls, 1963: 49-53 ("[Who] is more unreasonable than one who will not listen to beauty until he knows that it comes from a new economic class that advances the techniques of production?" [53]).

the constitution of the theory of suggestion, yet how consistently it escapes the linguistic-philosophical inquiry promoted by Ananda and his followers.

We may begin with the first example of *dhvani* that Ananda offers:

- (1) You're free to go wandering, holy man.

The little dog was killed today
by the fierce lion making its lair
in the thicker on the banks of the
Godā river.

(*bhama dhammia*, etc.) (DA 52)

Ananda prefaces this illustration with a general account, well-known to every student of Sanskrit literature, of how literary texts signify. In addition to the explicit meaning of a literary discourse, he tells us, there is a second signification that "comes to be understood" (*pratiyamana*), one "thrown forth" (*akshipta*) by the explicit meaning when one senses one cannot "rest content" with it, and which one "'gets' immediately when one's mind is looking for the truth."⁸ Three text features can be projected in this process of literary implication: a figure of sense (*arthalamkara*), an aesthetic emotional state (*rasa*), and, as in the above verse, some bare narrative matter (*vastumatra*). Ananda's first five examples are of this third category, not only because implication is most easily demonstrated in *vastudhvani*, but also because it is no doubt this form that first suggested the

phenomenon that Ananda elaborated into a unified theory of literariness. *Vastudhvani* contains various subspecies, usually characterised in terms of the commands or prohibitions they communicate (given the traditional Sanskrit understanding of sentence meaning, which Bhoja, discussed below, explains for us). The first, in which the explicit meaning is a command whereas the meaning one "comes to understand" is actually a prohibition, is illustrated in the poem "You're free to go wandering, holy man." Ananda is explicitly concerned only with the "bare narrative matter" implied, and not with the question of who understands the prohibition that comes to be understood. And indeed, whose mind is "looking for the truth"? Is it the mendicant, someone else in the poem listening on, the reader? The next four examples complete his typology and provide us with the answer (I give them in the fine translation of Ingalls).

- (2) Mother-in-law sleeps here, I there:
look, traveler, while it is light.
For at night when you cannot see
you must not fall into my bed

Here, an explicit prohibition implies a command (an invitation), which, like the express meaning, is directed to and meant to be understood by the addressee, the traveller (and misunderstood by the mother-in-law listening on).⁹

⁸ *vācyārthavimukhātmanām | buddhau tattvārthadarśinyām jhātity evāvabhāsate* (DA 1.12).

⁹ Abhinava implicitly believes the mother-in-law to be present, and it is for this reason he understands *maha* as "our [bed]" (not as a royal plural, as taken by Ingalls et al., 1990: 99) (DA 71). Mahimabhata is explicit about her presence (*śvaśrūsaṃnidhau*, VV 468). This militates against the interpretation of *ṇimajjāi*

- (3) Go, and let the sighs and tears
be mine; nor let them rise
from you as well, tortured,
being without her, by your hateful
courtesy.

Here, the point of the explicit command is not to tell the male addressee either to leave or to stay, but just to reproach him; this implied meaning, like the express statement, is directed to the addressee.

- (4) Turn back, I beg you. You are
making trouble
for other ladies stealing to their
lovers.
The moonlight of your
countenance destroys
their covering darkness, wretched
woman.

Here again, the point of the explicit prohibition is not to tell the female addressee either to go or not to go, but just to pay her a compliment; this implied meaning, again like the express statement, is understood by the addressee.

- (5) Who wouldn't be angry to see
his dear wife with her lower lip
bitten?
You scorned my warning to smell
the bee-holding lotus. Now you
must suffer.

This last example differs from the previous four, according to Ananda's explicit statement, in that the literal meaning and the implication are directed to two different people.¹⁰

In the first verse, we must therefore assume, Ananda believes it is the mendicant who is meant to understand the implied prohibition, as well as the express command. It is easy enough to see, in the second example, what the implied command to the traveller is, and why it has to be conveyed by way of an express prohibition (which only the mother-in-law takes at face value). But what precisely is the prohibition to the mendicant, why should it be conveyed by implication, and who in fact is speaking? One might assume, in view of example 2, that the prohibition is "You're not free to go wandering," but why is he not free? The presence of the lion presumably is meant to cancel out what the absence of the dog makes possible, but the lion has its lair at the riverside, no obvious place for a mendicant to be told to go wander. Yet it is there, evidently, that the prohibition is directed, since the only thing mentioned in the poem that can negate the explicit permission is the lion. Example 2, again, would lead us to suppose that the prohibition is conveyed by implication because a third party is listening whom the speaker may be trying to deceive, but that seems not to be the case here, and there appears to be no deception. And from the information in the four bare lines of the poem itself, we have no clear idea who is speaking – beyond the fact that he or she is aware of the mendicant's earlier troubles with

"sleeps dead to the world" (found in other commentators), which is meant to allay the traveller's worries of being discovered, and which would hardly be used in the mother-in-law's presence.

¹⁰ *vācyād vibhinnaviṣayatvena vyavasthāpitaḥ* (DA 76). Abhinava affirms here that in the first four verses, both the literal and implied meanings are supposed to be addressed to the same person (DA 76).

"the" dog – and it is the identity of the speaker that would seem to be key to answering the other questions and to making sense of the verse.

Moreover, why would someone speak this way, and not just issue a prohibition plainly and directly: "Stay away from the river"? One can hardly imagine the speaker to be another mendicant, for example, for he would simply have said, "You can go wandering wherever you want but don't go near the river, there's a lion there." To assert that this is poetry and poetry is precisely a use of language that differs from plain and direct statement – *vakrata* or indirection is actually a category familiar from the earliest Sanskrit systematic thought on literariness – would only be to restate the problem of meaning production, not analyse it. What we want to know is what we need to know to unravel the problem of indirection satisfactorily. To put this in Sanskrit terms: underlying all implication is some contradiction (*baadha*) in the denotation, a contradiction that itself derives from a specific intention (*prayojana*), and it is this intention we cannot begin to make sense of without more information. From the fact that the speaker only expresses the prohibition implicitly we might infer some reluctance to evince interest, or a desire to evince a lack of interest, in the mendicant's keeping away from the riverside. But who wants to stop him without saying so openly, and to avoid indicating too keen a desire – or again, to conceal all desire – in doing so? Someone who has something to hide,

perhaps, about something in the thicket at the riverside. But that is as far as the rational common reader can go, with the mere four-line poem at hand – and remember that the mere quatrain is not a fragment of some larger work but constitutes in itself a complete and self-sufficient piece of literature.

Ananda comments no further on his first example of *dhvani*, and the analytical system he proceeds to construct does nothing to help in understanding the verse. Evidently, unless the poem is embedded in a more complete context, a richer language, so to speak, that supplements the sign system in use, there can be no access to the implication let alone its significance, that is, the *dhvani*.¹¹ Such a language or context can only be the socio-literary tradition itself; in the case of *bhama dharmia*, the social conventions traditionalised in Prakrit poetry. The commentators on Ananda will, of course, contextualise the poem, albeit without explaining why it is necessary, let alone reasoning through the process of contextualisation. And that this is indeed a matter in need of rationalisation becomes evident when we observe the social complexities, and sometimes confusions, of the interpretations themselves.

Here, for example, is what Abhinavagupta, Ananda's only extant commentator, has to say about the verse: "These are the words of a certain woman spoken in order to save a trysting place [...] from the intrusions of a mendicant [...]. His walking in that place is a

¹¹ Observe that Ananda does not make clear with respect to this verse that the *vastumatra* does not itself constitute the content of the aesthetic *suggestion*. Bhoja seems to be the first to do so; see below.

natural activity that has been inhibited by fear of a dog." Abhinava's interpretation seems strikingly underdetermined; indeed, his translators believe it even misses the point of the verse. Nothing in the poem itself tells us the speaker is a woman, that the thicket is a place of rendezvous, and that the point of the verse is to keep the mendicant away, and the commentator does nothing to justify or even conceptualise his understanding. Moreover, as Ingalls et al. rightly point out, if the dog had frightened the mendicant from the place of rendezvous, what is the point of her inventing a lion to terrify him further? It would certainly be astonishing if the celebrated commentator failed to grasp, or did not care to show he wholly grasped, the point of the first illustration of the central matter of the book he is setting out to explain.¹² Evidently the "richer language" called for above is necessary not only for outsider readers such as ourselves.

Abhinava's contemporary, Bhoja, who is the next commentator in chronological order, is too terse to allow us to see his full understanding of the verse, but at least he explains the difference between the implied and the suggested meanings: "In this poem, whereas the statement of command, 'You are free to wander' is explicit, a prohibition is understood: 'There is a

lion in that thicket, and since you are afraid even of a dog, don't go there.' The prohibition implicit in the express command suggests [another] meaning, i.e., about [the speaker's] rendezvous with someone in a thicket at the river," a suggestion that, obviously, only the reader understands.¹³ In the generation after Bhoja, Mahimabhattacha offers a fuller explanation. Mahima's principal objective throughout his *Vyaktiviveka* is to prove that the logical procedures of inference are entirely adequate to explain the phenomenon of suggestion (or at least implication), and that therefore no new category, such as "*dhvani*," need be invented. Our interest here is in his understanding of the verse itself (rather than in how he understands the logical process of understanding), and he shows just how complicated this is:

A certain woman, hungry for the sweet pleasure of undisturbed lovemaking, has made a rendezvous with some lucky fellow in a deserted forest spot alive with bees attracted by the sweet-smelling flowers. There is an ascetic who wanders there to pick the flowers, and she perceives his coming to her spot as an impediment to her plans. Being clever, she acts like a simple girl in mentioning to him only the absence of any reason to fear through the death of the dog – though of course she knows full well that lions are vicious creatures – in hopes of giving him some

¹² A fact not, perhaps, fully appreciated by Ingalls et al., who only record the error: "One may correct Abhinava's comment . . . Abhinava's incorrect interpretation of the verse here leads him to a farfetched hypothesis" (1990: 84, 98).

¹³ Bhoja adds: "Since this suggested meaning is perceived as something above and beyond the meaning of the sentence, it is the type of suggestion known as echo (*pratishabdadhvani*) rather than the type known as reverberation (*anunadadhvani*)" (SP 390, 395).

good news. And thus by means of a command she brings about a prohibition of his wandering.

(VV 463ff)¹⁴

The same problems as in Abhinava's interpretation confront us in Mahima, and it will not be until Hemachandra (ca. 1175) in his subcommentary on his own *Kavyanushasana* that things seem to get fully sorted out:

A certain loose woman is always leaving her house, under the pretext of fetching water from the river, in order to meet her lover in a thicket on the bank of the Godavari river. She regards a mendicant as an obstacle in that he destroys the thicket by gathering flowers [for his worship]. And though she is a clever woman she speaks here like an ingenue: "The dog" that used to harass you whenever you entered our compound was careless and, to our good fortune, was "killed" or slaughtered today by "the," i.e., well-known, "fierce," i.e., taking no pity on the dog, "lion," i.e., invincible. . . . The lion will not bother you here [in the village], since it is "making its lair" or constantly staying in a thicket on the banks of the Godavari. You may therefore continue to wander without worry.

(*Kavyanushasana* 47).

We are now told that it is the mendicant's wandering, not at the river (so Abhinava and Mahima) but at the

woman's house in the town that had been interrupted by the dog, and it is there that he is being invited to continue.¹⁵ That would make no sense in the case of the riverside, however, where he is implicitly prohibited from going. Hemachandra, accordingly (as both Mahima and Abhinava) adds that mendicants gather flowers for their religious observances at riversides and even end up stripping bare the dense camouflage offered by thickets on riverbanks. It still remains unclear, however, why a village dog would be killed at the river side; some commentators suggest the point of the adjective "fierce" is to indicate that the lion has entered the town, but that of course would stand in hopeless contradiction with the express command as understood by Hemachandra.¹⁶

Moreover, unlike example 2, where the explicit is cancelled by the implicit ("Don't get into my bed at night / Get into my bed at night"), here a command is not negated ("You're free to go wandering / "You're prohibited from going wandering"), but only restricted or otherwise prohibited: the mendicant is free to go in one place, but not in another; he can continue to beg, but must not go to the river. The problem of the absence of co-referentiality (*vyadbhikaranatva*) of the command (to beg at the house) and the prohibition (to stay away from the river) was intimated

¹⁴ I understand *-māraṇamātrātrāsa* (for *-māraṇamātrātrāsa*).

¹⁵ This is actually connoted, according to Ingalls et al., by the word *bhama*, which they accordingly translate "go your rounds" (1990: 83), though neither Abhinava nor Mahima heard such a connotation.

¹⁶ Mahima thinks it entirely "inappropriate" (*anuchita*) to have a noble lion, fierce or not, kill a dog ("I have given this a lot of thought and still cannot figure out the poet's intention"), and in despair decides to emend the text (to "fierce bear") (466).

by Mammata when restating Mahima's logical argument, but only fully answered by Kamalakara in the seventeenth century (see KP 254ff).¹⁷

What should be clear from this example is that the linguistic theory of suggestion it is adduced to illustrate (like Mahima's inferential logic meant to challenge that theory) does nothing to help us grasp what we really need to grasp in order to understand this verse. We should note at once, too, that the absence of its semantic core is no peculiarity of this verse, but is actually fundamental to *vastudhvani* poetry (and in a more general way, to much Sanskrit poetry); similar complexity attaches to the other examples. At first glance, the fifth example seems to have no point at all – that of course is precisely the reason we seek something more. We know this is a poem (though Sanskrit theory is uninterested in how we know), and poets do not write poetry that ends in pure banality. But how do we come to understand what more is in play here? What else is implied and suggested and to whom? Again, the commentators only supply the putative context and are unconcerned with explaining how it is known, but, again, nothing about it is self-evident. According to Abhinava, “The literal sense is directed to an

adulterous wife. The suggested (*vyangya*) sense, on the other hand, is directed to her husband, and informs him that she is not guilty of offense” (Ingalls et al., 1990: 104).¹⁸ Bhoja similarly identifies both the implication and the suggestion: “The literal sense is the girlfriend's reproach, which is meant to carry the implication (*pratyayan*) to the husband, so as to allay his jealousy, that his wife's lip was wounded by a bee and not by her paramour, and it suggests (*dhvanati*) the friend's cleverness at hiding indiscretions” (SP 395).¹⁹ Once more, we find interpretation underdetermined by the poem itself – obviously, none of this essential information can be gotten except from a social subtext altogether unthematized by the commentators. Even then the meaning of the verse is not self-evident, but rather depends on what element is emphasised. Ananda's exposition so far has led us to assume that the implied meaning is the meaning truly intended (“Do not go to the riverside”; “Come to my bed”) emerging out of the duplicitous express meaning (“You're free to go wandering”; “You must not fall into my bed”). Here, accordingly, we might assume that the literal sense is intended rather for the husband (“It is just a bee-sting”), and the implicit sense

¹⁷ Note that Mammata silently emends Mahima's interpretation of the verse. The implicit problem of *vyadhikaranatva* in Mammata is addressed in the *Kamalakara* (186).

¹⁸ They seem to mistranslate on p. 105: *sahasvety api ca tadviṣayaṃ vyaṅgyam* means: “The sentence ‘Now you must suffer’ – i.e., swallow your anger – “contains another implication directed to the husband” (not, “There is also a suggestion that he must suffer”). Abhinava's usage of *vyangya* here is loose, as Bhoja shows in what follows.

¹⁹ Bhoja adds, “This is suggestion of the echo type [rather than the reverberation type] because what is meant as admonition [about bees] for one person [the wife] produces its effect [about her fidelity], contrarily, in the mind of another [the husband]” (*anyopadeśāparatvena pravṛtto 'nyasya cetasi pratiphalitah*).

("It is really a lover's bite"), if not for some third person in the vicinity, or simply the reader, then for the wife herself, who is thereby being admonished by her friend with reference to the effort required to keep her affair secret. This will be reversed if it is the suffering that is stressed. Here the wife becomes the addressee of the explicit statement, "You will have to suffer your husband's jealous anger because of his misinterpretation of your act," even though the wife knows it is not a misinterpretation, and the husband becomes the addressee of the implication that it would be a misinterpretation.

But here again, whatever the truth (if there is a singular truth) of the meaning of this or any of the other verses – and much Sanskrit and Prakrit poetry are indefinitely interpretable – it is clear that far more than a theory of implication and suggestion is necessary to explain implication and suggestion. Later theoreticians do try to supplement Ananda's system with a theory of speech pragmatics; Mammata offers the first full systematisation: "Aesthetic suggestion is a semantic function (*arthasya vyaparāḥ*) that produces in sensitive readers the idea of something different [from the direct sense], by means of [nine different factors of pragmatic] specificity (*vaishistya*): that of the speaker, the addressee, the tone of voice, the syntagm of the sentence, the expressed sense, the presence of a third person, the context, the time, or the place" (KP 72).²⁰ Yet it remains uncertain whether Mammata's system

does more than organise the knowledge presupposed to exist, while failing to explain how the knowledge comes about in the first place. Consider his first example:

It's a very heavy water jug
I'm carrying,
my friend, and I've come
back quickly.
I've got to rest a second
since I'm weak
and sweating and sighing
from exhaustion.

(KP 3.13, p. 73)

Now, it is perfectly true that what makes it possible for the sensitive reader to understand that this verse is about "concealing stolen lovemaking," as Mammata puts it, is the "specificity of the speaker." But the only thing that allows us to specify this specificity is the reader's participation in and acceptance of a particular universe of social meaning as made available in the texts of a literary culture.

It is precisely the embeddedness of these poems in a set of particular conventions and rules of literary communication, their particularity and localisation, that constitutes their meaning, but in a way that Ananda, Mammata, and the rest seem unable to observe. Although they show uncommon acuity in revealing the mechanisms by which implication and suggestion arise, nowhere do they tell us how we come to know what we need to know in order to understand them. What is necessary for us to know is not available through any pure theory of

²⁰ The seeds of Mammata's system are found in the work of his teacher, Mukulabhatta, see *Abhidhavaritramatrika*, pp. 24 (*karika*) and 31-41 (*vrutti*). I thank Lawrence McCrea for this reference.

language, such as is envisioned in the analysis of semantic powers (*vritti*) that Ananda offers, and the whole analytical tradition that follows him.²¹ What is needed, instead, is an account of the social particular. In other words, the semantics of Sanskrit literary theory requires supplementation not only by a general linguistic pragmatics but by a specific social pragmatics, which can explain to us what thickets on riverbanks signify (beyond the fact of their being thickets on riverbanks), what people do there, why privacy in thickets should be desirable; how adultery is regarded in this world, how it is hidden, who does so and why.

Except by acquiring and theorising this social-literary competence, we cannot know that riverbanks in Prakrit poetry, especially densely overgrown riverbanks, are places where lovers go, that is to say, unmarried couples who have no other place to be alone together. But couples who are not married cannot, in Prakrit poetry, licitly be together (though of course they are always together in Prakrit poetry). And, so, calling attention to one's desire to preserve the privacy of the rendezvous spot – by use of a direct prohibition ("Don't go there!") – is tantamount to revealing the illicit liaison itself. The very linguistic form causes us to ask who

would make such a statement, and it is only from familiarity with the larger social text that we can know it is the woman in the illicit relationship. The gender relations that constitute the social world of Prakrit poetry demand that it is always the woman, never the man, who organises adultery. Only when we know such social-literary facts does the real suggestion behind the poems become available: the very formulation of the statements – meaning without saying, communicating by not communicating – suggests that the women speakers are sophisticated and clever, and ardent to preserve, in the one case, a place of lovemaking, and in the other, a girlfriend's marriage (or rather, her affair). And in a way, once we know all this, our own reading becomes a satisfying exercise in the revelation of our own sophistication, since not only can we understand the meaning of the clever women's meaning, but we understand something that the holy man and the cuckolded husband necessarily cannot, since the whole point is artfully to allay their suspicions, in the first case about the place of rendezvous while keeping him away, and in the second, about his faithless wife.

More important than supplying the conditions for aesthetic suggestion to succeed, however, the social text of the

²¹ Or contemporary Western theory. A literary application of speech-act theory, for instance, might help make more precise the perspectival shift whereby one sort of speech act is transformed into another. (Thus a constative utterance, a statement of something's being true or false, becomes really a performative of the illocutionary sort, seeking to bring about a new state of affairs – to stop the mendicant from wandering along the Godavari river – and not to make a statement about the wild kingdom or any such thing.) But that, I believe, is about as far as such an analysis is going to take us. For a suggestive exposition see Hanks (1992: 99ff, on Grice's "conversational implicatures"), who makes the important point that "Literal meaning is defeasible: If you alter the situation of utterance, the literal meaning of the form will change" (108).

Prakrit world is presupposed and thereby reproduced as a stable text. When both readerly expectation and theoretical concern are focussed on the linguistic mechanisms of meaning, and the complexities that allow different meanings to occur, the social conditions of aesthetic suggestion escape observation let alone interrogation. The conditions for understanding this literature are the permanence, predictability, the common-sense of the social world, and by the very writing and reading of this and all other poetry – and this seems to be a crucial social effect – these conditions are made all the more permanent, predictable, and commonsensical. It is the very taken-for-grantedness of this world, for its part, that renders it invisible to readers like Ananda; the sphere of social (or literary) convention was one they inhabited too deeply to see. Language is only the mechanism of such poetry, yet it has monopolised theoretical reflection. The poetry is about the people and their world, and is intelligible only through that world. Yet it is a world occluded to theory because it is too far inside consciousness to be rendered an object of consciousness. In a word, literary suggestion is social, and sequesters the social from critical inspection.

False Feelings

On its face, the problem of *rasa*, aesthetic emotion, and its complement,

rasabhāsa, the semblance of such emotion, would hardly seem to impinge on the problem of the social aesthetic. As conventionally understood, *rasa* refers to the reader's emotive response to literature, and especially to the uniqueness of this response, the fact that we take pleasure in sad stories, for example, but not in real sadness. It is accordingly often treated as a philosophical question.²² *Rasa* – and here is the common understanding – is a produced when certain “stable” or primary emotions (*sthayibhava*) of ours are fully developed by stimulation from a suitable object (*alambanavibhava*) under appropriate external conditions (*uddipyanavibhava*), and nuanced by more evanescent feelings (*vyabicharibhava*) that are themselves made manifest by physical reactions (*anubhava*). All this activates our own latent dispositions (*vasanas, samskaras*) to respond sympathetically. *Rasabhāsa*, for its part, is usually understood to refer to a “counterfeit” form of readerly response that results from some deficiency in the causal set, as when the object of the primary emotion is an unsuitable one. This negative analysis of *rasabhāsa*, as inauthentic, deficient aesthetic experience, is widespread; it is implicit in the following remarks of Ingalls and his collaborators:

The concept of *rasābhāsa* is highly restrictive of literature. If we are to limit *rasa*, the sole aim of literature, to only such subjects as

²² Indeed, sometimes as a “speculative paradigm for theology,” see Gerow, 1994. What follows here is a historical critique, not a philosophical evaluation, of Abhinava's aesthetic. To measure just how sophisticated this is, one need only compare the relatively simplistic solutions to the same problem that the best in contemporary aesthetics has to offer, e.g., Feagin, 1997.

conform to propriety and even to the *sāstras*, as Udbhata would have it, not a little of Sanskrit literature and surely the greater part of Western literature will be judged to be of little worth. Abhinava seems to have been the first Indian critic to face this problem and find an answer: the *ābhāsatva*, the impropriety, of such experiences is something we realize only later; during the actual experience we are absorbed. . . . Interesting are [Abhinava's] remarks on *rasābhāsa*, false or improper *rasa*. . . . If one guides one's criticism strictly by the words of Bharata . . . such false love should lead to comedy. In fact, says Abhinava, it may lead to comedy only at a time long after our experience. When we hear Rāvaṇa's passionate words in the *Rāvaṇakāvya* [now lost] there is no occasion for relishing comedy. . . . This qualification opens up to favorable evaluation much that would have been rejected or reprehended by older standards. (Ingalls et al., 1990: 111; 37)²³

This assessment of *rasabhāsa* – as an audience response that is somehow inauthentic – seems to me misleading. For one thing, far from solving an old problem, Abhinava and the school to which he belonged may be said to have created a new one. For another, the category *rasabhāsa* is not the cause of unfavourable literary evaluation, but rather is constitutive of the moral concern at the core of Sanskrit literature and literary theory, if one with its own long and complicated history.

Understood in accordance with the dominant tradition that preceded Abhinava, *rasabhāsa*, like *rasa* in general, had originally far less to do with psychology and axiology than with the sociology of the Sanskrit aesthetic.

To sustain the first part of this argument, it is necessary briefly to recapitulate the history of thinking about *rasa* and to grasp the true magnitude of the Kashmiri transformation of the concept.²⁴ Like the “taste” that *rasa* metaphorically references, which may be regarded as a property of the food, of the taster, or of the act of tasting, *rasa* can theoretically be regarded in three dimensions: as a dimension of a textual object, as a competence of a reader-subject, and as a transaction between the two. It is a process that exists as a totality even while its moments can be analytically disaggregated, and it is this analytical disaggregation – or rather the different emphases that such disaggregation permits – that marks and makes the history of Indian thinking on the subject. Thus, one issue that fundamentally concerned theorists (it is well known, since it is widely discussed in *alamkāraśāstra* itself) pertains to the location of *rasa*: is aesthetic emotion to be considered, in the first instance, as a text-immanent phenomenon, relating primarily to the narrative itself, or as a reception phenomenon, relating primarily to the audience? In Sanskrit terms, who “has *rasa*,” the character or

²³ For some general remarks on the topic of *rasabhāsa*, see also Krishnamoorthy, 1974 and Bhattacharya, 1935.

²⁴ I can be brief here, since I have set forth my understanding of the problem at length in Pollock, 1998.

the reader?²⁵ The "old view," ascribed by Abhinava to Lollata and others, unequivocally accepted, and no doubt only knew, the first alternative: "*Rasa* is nothing more than what in its initial stage is a stable emotion, after this has combined with the transitory feelings and so on to become fully developed; and it is located in the character and there alone." This was more or less the position of Anandavardhana himself in the mid ninth century; he seems to know nothing of the doctrine of readerly *rasa*. It is certainly the position of Bhoja, Sanskrit's greatest synthesiser of literariness (a contemporary of Abhinava, as noted, and ignorant of his work). Indeed, it is widespread misunderstanding about the analytical primacy of the literary text in Bhoja's account of *rasa* that has produced such confusion about the sense of his doctrine of "Passion" (DA 184).²⁶

This long-standing conception of *rasa* was first challenged in the theological aesthetics of Kashmiri

writers of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Viewing literary and religious experience as paradigmatically related, they redirected the analysis of *rasa* toward the consciousness of the experiencer. For Bhatta Tauta, for example, the focal point became the commonalities of reader, writer, and character; for Abhinava, the processes of response itself; for Bhatta Nayaka, the language operations underlying this response and the specificity of its epistemological status. One move in this transformation that encapsulates it entirely is Abhinava's recoding of Bharata's foundational *rasa-sutra*: *rasanishpatti* is made to refer, no longer to the production of *rasa* in the text, but to the production of *tadvishayarasana*, the tasting of the object of *rasa*.²⁷

It was only when *rasa* and its semblance-forms became a matter of the reader's reading, rather than the character's character, that the idea of *rasabhāsa* became a problem to be solved.²⁸ The psychological and

²⁵ I ignore here less consequential views that invested the actor with *rasa*, or the poet. The first is quickly dismissed. The second remains in play as a supplementary position, though for some it is the principal, thus Rajashekhara (see *Kavyamimamsa*, 45ff, especially p. 46.8: it is the expressions of the poet, not the characters, that have or do not have *rasa*; whatever the *rūpa* of the thing itself, the fact of its having *rasa* or not is dependent on the particular talents of the poet).

²⁶ Abhinava discusses the history of the idea of *rasa* in various places. The one time Ananda actually mentions the locus of *rasa* he identifies it as the character or the narrative voice (DA 318). Ingalls et al. note the difference between him and his commentator (1990: 18-19; especially p. 413: "It is perfectly clear that Ananda is here using *rasa* in its old sense of a particularly vivid emotion ... not in the new sense established by Abhinava, of aesthetic delight"), but the implications of this difference are not developed in their work.

²⁷ See in general Pollock, 1998: 117-142; and for Abhinava in particular, NS 279.

²⁸ The term is first used in Udbhata (see below), but his own views on *rasa* are hard to work out. He describes *rasavat* as "[a trope] in which the rise of *rasas* is clearly displayed" ("That is, by which *rasa* is manifested, *āvirbhāvah*, in a clear form," says Induraja (58)), suggesting strongly that *rasa* for him is in the hero. Induraja accordingly comments, on the example quoted, that "Śiva's *śṛṅgāra* is set forth literarily" (*[upa]nibaddhaḥ*) (on 4.3-4).

axiological difficulties that bothered Abhinava – when precisely do we realise that our aesthetic experience is only a semblance, a shadow of the real thing, and what precisely are we feeling before we come to that realisation? – arise only when *rasabhāsa* is held to be in essence a reception event. He offers an interesting solution: “The *abhasatva*, the impropriety, of [our] experiences is something we realise only later; during the actual experience we are absorbed,” whereby, accordingly, the aesthetic experience of *rasabhāsa* itself becomes a semblance, a *charvanabhāsa*, specious aesthetic relishing (NS 289; DA 78-79). But this, I believe, is a solution to a problem of his own making.

In the episteme Abhinava so successfully overthrew, what is at issue is the genuineness or semblance, or better, validity or invalidity of a character's affective state as such, qualifications that we shall see are eminently social (and not philosophical, as when Aristotle terms feelings false when they are irrational and groundless).²⁹ Here, the idea of *rasabhāsa* can in no way be construed as “restrictive” or evaluative of literature, as if *rasabhāsa* signified a

shortcoming, “only *rasabhāsa*” (Ingalls et al., 1990: 37). For Bhoja, it is in fact a species of *rasa*:

Rasa is of three sorts: developed (*prakṛṣṭa*); remaining in the form of a feeling (*bhāvarūpa*); and a semblance (*ābhāsa*). A “developed” *rasa* is that which the leading character, the one who occupies the chief role in the narrative, comes to feel in reference to a commensurate object. That which “remains in the form of a feeling” is what a supporting character comes to have, and which is not fully developed. That which the antagonist comes to have, or is ascribed to an animal, is a semblance of *rasa*. (SP 665.12ff)³⁰

Like *guṇa*, *bhava*, and *rasa* itself, *rasabhāsa* is an *alamkāra*, a general factor of literary beauty, according to Bhoja's terminology. Its presence in combination with these other components (*samsrīṣṭi*) is a necessary feature of *rasaviyoga*, the indispensable presence of *rasa* in a work of art. In all this, as so often elsewhere in his work, Bhoja seems to me to express a general consensus of the entire earlier tradition.³¹

²⁹ A remarkable recent account of varieties of analysis (philosophical, moral and so on) of the emotions is de Sousa, 1987.

³⁰ For *rasabhāsa* as ornament, see p. 666.3ff. and p. 693.15. The expression of passion on the part of animals becomes a stock example of *rasabhāsa*, despite the fact that the “grief” of a *krauncha* hen lies at the origin of Sanskrit poetry (or at least is the cause of the real grief in the poet that lies at the origin of poetry, *Ramayana* 1.2.9ff). Yet some later thinkers rejected the view that the causal factors of *rasa*, including primary feelings, do not apply to animals, and accordingly they are said to have *rasa* (so Vidyadhara and Bhimasena Dikshita, cited in Bhattacharya, 1935: 241). Considerably less discussed was the question whether a *mleccha* can be the site of *rasa* (this is denied by Vidyānātha [Prataparudriya 60]).

³¹ Moreover, thinkers after Abhinava increasingly found his views on *rasabhāsa* problematic. Thus Vishvanātha, while unequivocally accepting the view that *rasa* is located in the reader, rejected his account of the cognitive status of its semblance-form. For Vishvanātha, *rasabhāsa* is simply *rasa* (*Sahityadarpana* 3.260).

Accordingly, *rasabhasa* represents, not deviation or deficiency needing some new theory of response, but a necessary dimension of complex narratives, those that explore the complexity of the sentiments of persons acting in the world, and what it is that makes some valid (according to some social scale) and some invalid. But the presence of *rasabhasa* as such does not enfeeble literature, as if, since "the sole aim of literature" is *rasa*, when "real *rasa*" is not present, the true aim of literature is not attained.³² How, after all, could one have a *Ramayana* without Ravana? What is most important for our concerns here, it is through the process of the reader's gaining an awareness of this aesthetic, by grasping how and why certain sentiments as presented in literature are counterfeit and false while others are genuine and true, that its social force is generated. The issue is not the invalidity of our emotional response to a narrative, but rather what in narrative is taken to constitute invalid emotion.

Obviously the entire question of *rasabhasa* becomes intelligible only against the background of a broader normative discourse on what constitute

true and false emotions. This discourse finds expression in a variety of ways from the earliest periods of systematic reflection to the latest. In the *Natyashastra* itself, for example, although the term *rasabhasa* is not used, the social boundaries of aesthetic sentiment are clearly delineated. As is well known, characters are categorised according to a social-moral typology (the two concepts, again, forming an indissoluble whole) as "high, middle, and low" (*uttama*, *madhyama*, *adhama*), and *rasa* is achieved only when these types are properly aligned. In the case of *shringara*, the erotic sentiment, for example, the characters must be a heterosexual couple, young, and socially and morally "high" (*stripurushabetuka*, *uttamayuvaprakriti*).³³

The normative discourse first is clearly articulated where the term *rasabhasa* itself is first used, in the work of the early ninth-century thinker, Udbhatta. But there is no question that he meant to reprehend certain texts let alone reject them from the domain of the literary. He is instead interested in the problem of an ethical aesthetic. For him, *rasa* seems to have been a form of moral consciousness, a peculiar one that,

³² Even in its own terms I can make little cultural-historical sense of Abhinava's argument that readers realise a *rasa* to be *abhasa* only at the conclusion of the literary event, whereas in the course of it they experience it as *rasa*. In what sense would any traditional Indian experiencing the *Ramayana* believe Ravana's feelings for Sita to be not an *abhasa*, that is, to be in some sense "valid" (as Sanskrit culture understands that phrase) prior to the point of narrative closure? Surely we are aware from the start that it is a counterfeit, ultimately failed affect – real desire (*rati*), no doubt (though again Abhinava calls it *ratyabhasa*), but false love (*shringara*).

³³ NS prose after 6.45, p. 295. Bhoja brings out the full implication of this in the *Sarasvatikanthabharana*: *shringarabhasa* will always result in the case of a low character (*hinapatra*), an animal, the antagonist (*nayakapratiyogi*), as well as in cases of anthropomorphism (p. 477; see also Krishnamoorthy, 1974: 125–29). Given that Bharata's definition of *rasa* is itself social, the view of some commentators that *rasabhasa* lies in a failure to accord with the definition of *rasa* is really identical with the view that it lies in a violation of social norms, which therefore does not constitute an opposed position (pace Bhattacharya, 1935).

unlike other such forms, has a dimension of physicality. There is no reason to believe he would have disagreed with the verse his commentator cites: "*Rasa* is that specific kind of consciousness of the moral order (*chaturvarga*) – what should and should not be done – that can be 'tasted' (*asvadya*)."³⁴ For its part, *rasabhasa*, for which Udbhatta also uses, as part of an older typology, the term "the vehement trope" (*urjasvin*), is "composition of emotions or *rasas* where the action violates social norms (*anauchityapravritta*–) because of desire, anger, and so on."³⁴ As his commentator Induraja remarks: "In the literary form known as 'the vehement,' *rasas* and *bhavas* are represented as immoral (*anauchityena*) because [here the actions underlying the *rasas* and *bhavas*] are caused by passion, hatred, and delusion. That is in fact why it is called 'the vehement' form (*urjasvin*): vehemence, that is, physical force (*bala*), exists in it given that the use of force is prompted by one's miscognition of reality [that invariably underlies action motivated by passion, etc.]."³⁵ The example supplied by Udbhatta is a verse describing Shiva's impetuous (*bathena*) and immoral

(*apasya satpatham*) sexual impulses toward the virgin Parvati – a verse from his own (lost) *Kumarasambhava*.

A more explicit dimension of this social discourse, already glimpsed in some of the remarks cited above, came to be articulated through the concept of *auchitya*, propriety, in the last centuries of the first millennium, leading to a synthetic statement in Kshemendra's mid-eleventh century *Auchityavicharacharcha* (Inquiry into the Analysis of Propriety).³⁶ *Auchitya*, which according to Kshemendra's definition is a kind of correspondence between a textual signifier and an extra-textual signified (*sadr̥ṣaṃ kila yasya yat*, vs. 7), is a category applicable to every feature of the literary work: from the most minute formal element, the individual lexeme or even sub-lexical preverb and particle, to the largest component of the signification: the time and place of the action, the social status of the hero, and so on. As a state of being in accordance with the *svabhava* of a person or thing, *auchitya* is clearly related to and extends a wide range of earlier conceptions. But Kshemendra's importance for us, if not his novelty, lies in his unequivocal

³⁴ *Kavyalamkarasarasamgraha* 4.5–6. The sentence "*Rasa* is that specific kind ..." is cited anonymously by Induraja ad loc. (it is not known to Tilaka). The four types of literary text, *rasakavya*, *bhavaḥkavya*, *rasabhasakavya*, and *samhahitakavya* (this last is where a break occurs in the continuity of *rasa* because the intensity of the *vasana* of the prior *rasa* inhibits any other from manifesting itself, see Induraja on 4.8) are equated with the older categories (cf. *Alamkarasarvasva* cited in *Prataparudriya* [208]: *rasabhāvatadābhāsatatpraśamananibandhane rasavatpreyaūrjasvisamāhitāni*).

³⁵ I am not altogether certain about the last phrase: *svakalpanāparikalpitatvena*.

³⁶ For a brief historical overview of the category see Raghavan, 1942. He argues that, although the term *auchitya* is first used in literary discourse only in Yashovarman's early eighth-century play, the *Ramabhyudaya* (lost), and in literary-critical discourse first in Rudrata's (probably early ninth century) *Kavyalamkara*, the concept is already implicit in the NS (pp. 205, 209ff., 198). In the case of the *Aucityavicharacharcha*, too, if its analytical focus is certainly novel, it seems to me to enunciate a great deal that is implicit in earlier thinking.

affirmation of the constitutive relationship of propriety and aesthetic sentiment: *auchitya* now has become explicitly the life-force (*jivita*) of *rasa* itself: how laughable and disruptive of the heroic mood, Kshemendra says, is martial violence directed toward a suppliant, or, in the case of the piteous mood, compassion toward an enemy.³⁷

This perspective on true and false feelings as essential components of a rounded narrative does, however, begin to shift noticeably in later thinkers. Particularly instructive is the discussion in Jagannatha Panditaraja's mid-seventeenth-century masterpiece, *Rasagangadhara* (The [Five-Faced] Shiva of Aesthetic Emotion, RG). As so often in his work, Jagannatha begins his analysis by exploring a finer point of controversy. There is no uncertainty as to the fact that *rasabhāsa* results from some transgression of the social order measured against a set of moral norms. Jagannatha wants to elucidate this set, however, and thereby the causal mechanism of *rasabhāsa*,³⁸ by drawing a distinction between an emotion directed toward an inappropriate object and an emotion inappropriate in itself:

The property *rasābhāsa* derives from there being an inappropriate object or other cause." [This *kārikā* appears to represent an older position under examination]. The impropriety of an object or other cause is something people understand from social practices (*vyavahārataḥ*). Some critics hold that [*rasābhāsa* arises only when] it is the object cause [or other factor]³⁹ that people regard as unsuitable. Others disagree, on the grounds that, whereas that would cover such cases as desire for the wife of a sage [who is an inappropriate love-object], it would not include desire for more than one lover or desire not shared by both partners in a relationship. In the latter two cases there is no impropriety in the object cause as such [in the first, the cause is the fact of many lovers, all of whom may be appropriate love-objects; in the second, the cause is the attitude but not the social status of one of the partners]. Therefore, the primary emotion itself [in this case the emotion of desire, *ratisthāyibhāva*] has to be characterized by impropriety [for there to be *rasābhāsa*]. And in this way both desire for an inappropriate object, as well as desire for more than one

³⁷ See *Autchityavicharacharcha* vss. 8-10 for the programmatic statement, and, on *rasa* in particular, vss. 3, 4, 5 + prose, vs. 6 + prose. I noted above that both Ananda and Abhinava take *rasa* and *auchitya* to be intimately related (and *rasabhāsa* and *anauchitya*); see also DA 3.15 and 3.32; so *Vakroktijivita-karika* 53 and 54.

³⁸ Jagannatha asks whether the term *rasabhāsa* is a *karmadharaya* compound ("It is *rasa* and an *abhāsa*"): "One view holds it cannot be such because once a thing is a mere semblance, it ceases to be what it was, as in *hetvabhāsa* [a mere semblance of a good reason, a non-reason or logical fallacy]. On the second view, the essence of a thing is not lost just because it has some flaws: we can call an old horse a 'pale shadow of a horse' (*ashvabhāsa*) without its thereby ceasing to be a horse" (RG 118-119). Jagannatha seems to accept the second view.

³⁹ The *-adi* (in *vibhāvāda*) seems impossible to me, since it is precisely the additional factors, notably the *sthayibhava*, that are under examination.

lover or not shared by both partners would be included.

"Impropriety" would remain as defined above [i.e., established by social convention]. (RG 118)

It may seem a fine point to distinguish between inappropriate feeling and inappropriate object in the production of invalid sentiment. But it is easy enough to grasp, and the general thrust of Jagannatha's argument becomes clear through his examples, which concern the paramour of a queen, a girl casting her seductive glances at the many suitors at her front door, and a new bride trembling before her husband's embraces. A summary verse that he cites anonymously indicates that adultery, in addition to these three other conditions, all produce *rasabhāsa* in the case of *śringāra*.

What becomes clear in reading through Jagannatha's account is that aesthetic sentiment has transmogrified into something like aesthetic moralism. Here is how he lays out the social-moral boundaries of the emotions underlying each of the *rasas*:

Desire for an inappropriate object (a teacher's wife, a goddess, a queen), desire that is not reciprocated, desire on the part of a woman for more than one lover: none of these can produce the erotic *rasa* (*śringāra*) in its pure or authentic form. A father's grief for a son who is querulous and wicked, or grief on the part of ascetic [who has given up all attachments]; transcendental disenchantment with life (*nirveda*) on the part of an

untouchable, who has no right to participate in transcendental Vedic knowledge; martial energy on the part of a low-born man, or anger on the part of a timorous man or directed toward someone like one's father; amazement in response to a mere magic trick; laughter directed at one's father; fear in a hero; disgust felt for the fat or flesh or blood of a sacrificial animal – all these produce the semblance of the *rasas* of (respectively) pity, tranquility, the heroic, cruelty, wonder, the comic, terror, and loathing. (RG 122)⁴⁰

If *rasa* is a way of speaking about the literary promulgation of an ideal-typical social order, *rasabhāsa* seems now to be viewed, not as its necessary complement, something required to complete that ideal type, but as the literary promulgation of an immoral order, against which theory imposed increasingly harsh strictures. Desire for someone beyond one's station (a queen, a teacher's wife), like desire for someone who does not share it, and a woman's desire for more than one lover, violate this order and so are false feelings. So, too, when a father is shown to grieve for a wicked son, or when an untouchable is shown to have gained wisdom. Low-born men do not or cannot show martial energy, any more than cowards can show anger or heroes fear. Laughter and rage toward one's father are as much violations of this order as disgust in the face of sacrificial slaughter. All these are inversions, so to speak, of real eroticism, and pity, and heroism – and real

⁴⁰ Krishnamoorthy (1974: 135) errs in ascribing a similar passage to Govinda Thakur; the passage he cites is actually Vaidyanath Tātsat's paraphrase of Jagannatha.

sentiments, moreover, are absolute and unchanging, not situational and adaptive.⁴¹ Clearly, not only is literary theory concerned with the moral discourse that lies at the heart of literature. It seeks to explore, by use of the components of *rasa* analysis, precisely how that moral discourse is violated. In Jagannatha, *rasabhasa* does indeed verge on becoming an index, not only of a different order of literature, but of an inferior, even reprehensible kind of literature; no longer a category for explaining the dynamics of affect in the complex narratives that mark real life, but a sign of the unwanted intrusion of real life into literature.

This negative evaluation was already there in Abhinavagupta himself, and construes with much broader trends we will find expressed by Bhoja, too. Abhinava's concerns with reader-response notwithstanding, he retained a commitment to precisely the social-moral aesthetics that we find extending from Bharata to Jagannatha:

Appropriateness of the
[*sthāyī*] *bhāvas* is derived from
appropriateness of the characters.
Characters differ by their having
the emotions (*bhāvas*) of the upper,
middle, or lower classes and by
their having the emotions of gods

or humans. A basic emotional drive (*sthāyibhāva*) that is described by following these distinctions and not confusing them will be "appropriate".... If we assign a type of love to characters of the upper class by recourse to what is appropriate to the lower class (*uttama prakṛti*, *adhama prakṛti*), how ridiculous will be the result. Even in India what is appropriate in love differs according to the three classes of men.

If the "attainment" (*samṛpad*) appropriate to one's caste and family (*nijajāti kulānurvā*) is not present, sexual desire must not be represented (*anupadeśyā*) at all, because it does not lead to the fulfillment of the life-goals
(DA 3.10-14).⁴²

Here we glimpse what it was that did eventually become "restrictive of literature." This was not *rasabhasa* itself – which was a necessary component of narrative complexity, and a consequence of it – but some angst in the face of real-life socio-moral problems, and the threat posed by their reproduction in literature.

In addition to the assumption, implicit everywhere, that literature is not supposed to surprise with deviations from the typical, *rasa* and *rasabhasa* become the principal locus where

⁴¹ At one point Jagannatha seems to suggest the opposite when discussing what is suggested in a verse depicting Draupadi's glances at her five new (or soon-to-be) husbands. The *navyas*, he tells us, consider this is a case of *rasabhasa* because the objects of her desire are multiple, whereas the *pranchas* restricted the *abhasa* of *shringara* to a case of multiple lovers to whom the woman is not married (121). Whatever else this observation might mean, Jagannatha apparently saw his social world as discontinuous from that of the past; the scope of "impropriety" has changed. On the distinction between "new" and "old" scholars in the intellectual history of seventeenth-century India, see Pollock, 2001.

⁴² Translated by Ingalls et al., pp. 428, 432; NS, p. 305, and especially p. 265: *arthaḥ prayojanaṃ ca prītipurassaram vyutpattimayam*, "The 'meaning' [of poetry] also signifies its purpose, which is moral instruction through a pleasurable experience."

criticism of the literary work and criticism of life intersect, where literary practice becomes a social practice. If propriety lies at the heart of *rasa*, *rasa* becomes the heart of a moral economy of literature. It can produce its effects only to the degree that the imaginative discourse represents, and thereby inevitably serves to reproduce, what is appropriate to a given situation, which in turn is intelligible only in terms of a unified vision of the social order. Thus when one learns what literature is, how it works and the canons by which it may be said to represent what is valid or invalid, when one learns to be a good reader, a *rasika* or a *sabridaya*, one is learning what is normative in the everyday world. To produce readers of Sanskrit literature is to produce certain kinds of social subjectivities. *Rasabhasa* and the *anauchitya* that provides its logic are the locus where criticism of literary form and criticism of literary representation – criticism of life – intersect.

Moral Passion

If the social structuring of Sanskrit literary theory was obscured after the linguistic and theological turn of Kashmiri criticism, or remained unthematized precisely because it was so taken for granted,⁴³ its true significance is still visible in Bhoja's remarkable *Shringaraprakasha*. Bhoja is by no means uninterested in literature as a particular kind of language – the work as a whole

is in fact organised around the topics "word," "meaning," and modes of "unity" of the two (SP 6.8-17). But his express concern with the social grounds of literary imagination manifests itself with a clarity not easy to parallel in other *alamkara* texts. This may be attributable not only to his main objective of providing a *summa poetica* of the entire antecedent tradition, and making explicit what was often simply assumed, but also to the fact that as king of the Paramara dominion, Bhoja was especially sensitive to his social role: the writer of the SP, Bhoja tells us in his commentary on the first *karika* of the work, "is not just anyone but a great king appointed by his elders to protect all that has been inherited, and who in this verse beseeches God that there should be no violation against the established order (*sthita*) and practices of estates and life stages while he is engaged in the composition of this book" (SP 405.10ff).⁴⁴

There are three specific themes in Bhoja's treatise centrally concerned with the social aesthetic that I want to concentrate on here: the argument for the unitary meaning of a literary work and the idea of plot revision; the varieties of Passion; and the nature of the hero. In brief, Bhoja's general conception seems to me as follows: literary texts make moral arguments, and in view of this fact, received plots must be revised in the interests of such arguments. A moral argument is a

⁴³ As Vishvanatha puts it, *caturvargaprāptir hi kāvyato ... supratītaiva*, "It is perfectly well known that poetry enables us to achieve the four life-goals" (5)).

⁴⁴ See Pollock, 1998: 140.

general discursive phenomenon, however, not specific to literature. What is specific is *rasa*, and Bhoja shows that the moral order is inseparably connected with it: passion – *shringara*, the one *rasa* – is moral force. This is no Platonic-Christian conceptual scheme where the virtues and the passions are at war with each other; passions are virtues. The different kinds of protagonists embody the four main species of this force, and each one's relationship with his antagonist must manifest this.

The validity of such a summary depends, of course, on how carefully Bhoja's idiom, categories, and modes of argument have been understood. Since these are sometimes unusual – and his work is essentially unknown – I have tried to provide as much of the argument as possible in literal translation.

That the literary work has a unitary meaning above and beyond the meanings of the individual verses of which it is composed is something almost never addressed in Sanskrit theory except in the most perfunctory manner. Bhoja's rich account therefore merits close attention. I re-arrange the sections into an order more appropriate for our purposes here, starting with a passage where the literary text as a whole is situated within the overall structure of his exposition:

So much for what we have called "the necessary presence of *rasa*" (*rasāviyoga*) at the level of the sentence. Now we may consider it at the level of the work (*prabandha*). This, too, manifests itself by the eliminating of faults, the procuring of virtues, and the mixing of

elements of beauty, and becomes thereby a source of intellectual delight for intelligent readers. The "eliminating of faults" is the avoidance of impropriety (711.13). The "procuring of virtues" is the perfect construction (*susūtratā*) of a composition such as is achieved through adherence to genre rules (*samyaglakṣaṇayoga*) of the different kinds of literary works we will discuss. The "mixing of elements of beauty" is excellence in the arrangement of [the thematic components] of these works, such as the various descriptions of cities, oceans, and the like. (710.19ff.)

It is necessary for Bhoja next to establish the logic that allows us to comprehend the literary work as an individualised formal structure:

With regard to that [definition of the "procuring of virtues"], a "literary work" is a sequence of words, a succession of sentences, or a series of episodes that has a specific intended meaning (*iṣṭārtbhavyavacchinna* [cf. Dandin in 1.10]). Words whether verbs or nouns are commonly used for many purposes and cannot be more narrowly specified on the strength of their mere form; sentences are no less commonly used for all kinds of activities and have no [inherent] distinction that allows us to differentiate one [use] from another; similarly, episodes – for example, the portions of poems that describe mountains, cities, oceans, and the like – are components of every poetic text and contain in themselves no distinctiveness (*vyatireka*). Accordingly, there must be some large meaning (*mahāvākyaṛtha*) above and beyond that of the individual sentences, which is

made available by these [sequences, successions, and series], a definite meaning that can delimit (*avacchedabetu*) a literary text like a courtly poem, which is a totality of many [words], sentences, and episodes. This “meaning above and beyond” [the parts] “specifies” – that is to say, particularizes – the sequence of words, succession of sentences, or series of episodes, which thereby become a literary work: something like *Jānakīharana* (The Abduction of Janaki) or *Kumārasambhava* (The Birth of the Divine Prince). (712.3ff)

But the literary work is not just a totality different from other totalities in its words, sentences, and episodes. It also has a unified meaning:

Now, the larger meaning (*mahāvākyaṛtha*) generated by these episodes, [in any of the three great genres], whether courtly verse epic, historical prose-poem, or [the mixed form of the drama]; with its various parts standing in a hierarchical relationship (*kṛtānyonyaviśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva*); which is known by a name reflecting this larger meaning – *Subhadrāharana* (The Abduction of Subhadra), for example, or *Jānakīharana* – is called the “penultimate unified meaning of a work of literary art” (*prabandhai-kārtbhāvo 'paraḥ*). There is, however, an “ultimate unified meaning beyond the larger

meaning” (*para mahāvākhyai kārtbhāḥ*). It is a particular kind of insight (*pratibhā-viśeṣa*)⁴⁵ as to moral right and wrong generated in a person with innate receptivity (*upābitasamśkāra*) by the act of contemplating the meanings of a literary work – some insight like “act like Rāma, and not like Rāvaṇa” in the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. This [moral consciousness] is the sole cause of attaining the four life-goals, and undergirds the cosmos. It may rightly be called the beginningless and endless perfect *śabdabrahma* transformed into the form of verbal meaning. (471.16ff)⁴⁶

A *prabandha* or literary work results from a connected series of sentences that make an episode, and a connected series of episodes that make a total meaning, and a total meaning that makes a moral argument. Elsewhere this series of equations is collapsed into its simplest form: “The literary work is a sentence totality that causes us to understand what we should and should not do” (*vidhinīśedhāvagatibetuḥ mahāvākyaṃ prabandhaḥ*, 194.6). The fact, however, that literature has a capacity for moral communication – that the ultimate meaning of a literary text resides in a deontic statement – is grounded in a larger theory of sentence meaning. Bhoja elaborates on this definition in an important argument in Chapter 6:

⁴⁵ *Pratibha*, along with *bhavana* and *vidhi*, constitute for Bhoja the three types of sentence-meanings (p. 336, defined p. 339).

⁴⁶ Note that, whereas Bhoja employs the *brahma* metaphor to capture the core of moral insight, Bhatta Nayaka likens the experience of *rasa* with that of *brahma* as negating awareness (*parabrahmāsvādasabrahmacāritvam ... rasāsvādasya* (cited by Abhinava, DA 190). So later writers such as Vishvanatha: *vedyāntarasparsaśuṇyo brahmāsvādasahodaraḥ*, “[*Rasa*], emptied of all contact with other objects of cognition, is akin to the taste of the *brahma*” (*Sahityadarpana* 3.2).

Every sentence terminates in communicating a command or a prohibition. Even where an optative [imperative, or gerundive] is not expressly used we find that they are contextually supplemental (*vākyaśeṣa*) to every sentence, since every sentence aims toward a command or a prohibition. For example, in the sentence, "Alms are readily given in this region," what is understood is [the command] "Remain here"; ... in the sentence, "There are sharks in the water," what is understood is "Do not swim here." A "larger meaning,"⁴⁷ too, like the *Rāmāyaṇa* also communicates (*vyutpādyate*) in a similar manner: Rāma though dwelling in the forest obeyed his father's command and achieved success, whereas Rāvaṇa, though capable of victory over the whole world, lusted after another man's wife and was destroyed. Therefore, obey your father's order, do not lust after another man's wife, act like Rāma and not Rāvaṇa. (337.7ff.)

Given his view that the literary work has a unified meaning and necessarily communicates an ultimate moral commandment or prohibition, Bhoja is able more convincingly to argue the position, which after Ananda came to be widely held, that a work as a whole has a unified overall aesthetic impact (*prabandhaviśaye rasāviyoga*). For Bhoja, this comes about especially through the "elimination of faults" by the avoidance of impropriety (*anauchityaparihara*). One way to achieve this is to revise historical narratives. These constitute one of the five bodies of literary composition (*prabandhasavarirani*): those derived from

the epics (*itihāsaśraya*, e.g., *Kumarasambhava*), those derived from story literature (*kathashraya*, e.g., the Udayana cycle), those that are pure inventions (*utpadyetivrittam*, e.g., *Kadambari*, those that are historical (*anupadyetivritta*, e.g., *Harshacharita*), and those, finally, whose plots stand in need of emendation (*pratisamskāryetivritta*). On the last Bhoja remarks as follows:

If one were to compose a literary work on the basis of a story just as it is found to exist in the epics, it could come about that [one character,] though acting properly (*nyāyapravṛtteḥ*), might not only fail to attain the desired result but might attain precisely the result he does not desire; whereas [another character,] though acting improperly, might attain the result [he desires]. In such cases, emendation must be made in such a way that the character acting properly is not denied the result he desires, whereas the other not only should fail to attain his desire but should also attain what he does not want. Such is what [the category *pratisamskāryetivritta*] causes us to understand (*vyutpādayati*) (746.7).

Bhoja offers a range of examples of literary works whose plots have been revised in the interests of removing faults and so producing a unified aesthetic experience: the *Nirdosha-dasharatha* (Faultless Dasaratha), in which Rama is exiled by two magical creatures imitating his father Dasaratha and his step-mother Kaikeyi; Bhavabhūti's *Mahaviracharita* (Story of

⁴⁷ I am assuming the reading *mahākāvyaḥ* is an error for *mahāvākyaḥ*.

the Great Hero), in which Valin is slain by Rama after provoking Rama (rather than Sugriva) to a fight; Bhatta Narayana's *Veni-sambara* (The Tying of the Braid), in which Duhshasana's blood is drunk not by Bhima but by a demon who had taken possession of him; the *Harivamsha* (Lineage of Hari, a *mahākāvya*, and not the appendix to the *Mahabharata*), in which Mayavati is not really the wife of the guru of her lover Pradyumna, but is represented, along with Pradyumna himself, as reincarnations of the god of love and his wife Rati; and, most famously, Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, in which it is because of Shakuntala's insult to the sage Durvasa that Dushyanta is caused to forget about his relationship with her, and not because his love is inconstant (SP 711).⁴⁸

Bhoja's argument in general will be familiar to readers of Anandavardhana:

[A]nother means by which a work as a whole may become suggestive of *rasa* is the abandoning of a state of affairs imposed by historical reality [*itivyūttavaśāyātāsthitī*] if it fails in any way to harmonize with the *rasa*; and the introduction, by invention if need be, of incidental narrative appropriate to that *rasa*. This is to be carried out as it is done in the works of Kālidāsa and in the *Harivijaya* of Sarvasena and in my own *mahākāvya*, the *Arjuna-*

carita. A poet when writing a poem must concentrate with all his soul on the *rasa*. If he observes some state of affairs in the historical fact that goes against the *rasa*, he should eliminate it and invent some other story appropriate to the *rasa*. No purpose is served in a poet's providing merely the historical facts (*itivyūttamātra*). That is a task accomplished by historiography itself (*itihāśād eva*).⁴⁹

What Bhoja and Ananda both insist upon (and there were dissenters) represents a real and an important historical tendency.⁵⁰ Some of the texts Bhoja cites are no longer extant, but there is no reason to doubt that they all did once exist; they are no invention. The broader history of Sanskrit literary culture – we saw precisely this in the history of the idea of *rasabhasa* – fully testifies to a progress, slow but certain, in the elimination of core varieties of conflict, a gradual retreat to an ever more complete disengagement from the world of life's unpleasant realities, in favour of a single moral vision. In literature if not in life, as Bhoja says, "It must be the good guy, not the bad guy, who wins," *jigīṣuṇā guṇavataiva bhāvyam na doṣavatā* (SP 728.24). That the social informs the most basic architecture of

⁴⁸ The *Chalitarama* (lost), *Tapasavatsaraja*, and *Vikrantashudraka* (lost) are adduced as further revisions of the *Ramayana*, *Svapnavasavadatta*, and legends associated with King Shudraka. Similar questions are discussed in *Vakroktijivita* (249-51). Kuntaka sees the invention of the new plot rather as enhancing the requirements of *rasa* than removing a moral impropriety; but of course, these are two sides of the same coin.

⁴⁹ Somewhat different is the translation by Ingalls et al., 1990: 435.

⁵⁰ A school of thought represented by the king-poet Yashovarman of the eight-century that insisted on "no departure from the [received] story" (*kathāmāarge na cātikramah*) (cited by both Bhoja [711], and Ananda [335, 3.14], but with no indication that they saw a discrepancy).

Bhoja's work is equally evident in what self-avowedly constitutes his single most original contribution. As I read his treatise, Bhoja's important new insight, one informing his entire exposition, is the nature of passion itself. He argues that the forces and principles operative in what *rasashastra* had always called *shringara*, the erotic or, more simply, passion, are actually found to be present as the animating principle in all affective states (common language usage shows this, he notes: people can be said to "love to quarrel, or "love to joke" [662.12]). To this higher-order Passion (I signal it thus) Bhoja gives a variety of other names: *abhimana* (here a highly valorised trait, something like self-confidence and self-esteem, *amour de soi* as distinguished from *amour propre*), *abamkara* (sense of self), *prema* (love), and *rasa* (in the singular). Passion is what enables people – and again, he appears to mean those people selected for representation in literary texts – to experience the world richly. It represents their capacity for emotional intensity as such, and hence may be taken as the

origin of all other affective states, or *rasas* (plural). Moreover, it is this intensity that leads them to strive to fulfil the most crucial life-needs: "Passion alone is *rasa*, [and] the sole means of fulfilling the four life-goals" (5.16), identical with the kind of moral consciousness (*pratibha*) that, as we saw above, emerges out of penultimate literary meaning.⁵¹ In its fullest explication, Passion is shown to be understood fundamentally according to a moral typology, one that accordingly structures the interpretation of all features of the literary text.

There are four species of Passion, one relating to each of the four lifegoals, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*.⁵² In each of the four contexts "Passion" is defined as *abhimana*, the confidence and drive that enable one to proceed toward the acquisition of the value in question.⁵³ Passion for *dharma*, for example, is illustrated by Dushyanta's conviction, on seeing Shakuntala, that she must be a suitable mate in terms of caste, for otherwise his noble heart would not long for her; Passion for *artha*,

⁵¹ Abhinava discusses the relationship of *rasas* with the purposes of man in NS 275-76.

⁵² A particularly unfortunate lacuna in the text occurs at the beginning of Chapter 13 (840), where these categories are first discussed. To what degree Bhoja is indebted to earlier thinking on this subject is unclear. He surely knew NS 18.72ff (GOS ed.) (*śṛṅgāraḥ kartavyo dharme cārthe ca kāme ca*, etc., even if he nowhere cites the verses, cf. Raghavan, 1963: 455), though Bharata is interested only in the different motivations of love, and Bhoja's understanding of the four types of Passion, as the full array of his illustrations shows, is far more capacious. For an account of the abiding structure of the *trivarga* and *chaturvarga* amid the manifold ramifications in traditional Indian thought, along with some of the few coherent reflections on Bhoja's analysis here, see Malamoud, 1982, especially pp. 46ff.

⁵³ *tatra* [sc., *dharme*] *pravartamānasya tadavāptyabhimāno dharmasṛṅgāraḥ* (1079); [*up*]āyataḥ *pravṛttau tadavāptyabhimāno 'rthaśṛṅgāraḥ* (1106); *tadanukūlāyām pravṛttau tadupāyanatikrameṇaitadanubhavābhimāno kāmāsṛṅgāraḥ* (1144); *tadadhigamayogyatābhimāno mokṣasṛṅgāraḥ* (1177). For the first phrase, *tadavāptyabhimāno* is my conjecture for the *tarākhyān* (?) [sic] *atimāno* of Raghavan's edition; for the last, *tadadhigamayogyatābhimāno* is my conjecture for *tadadhiga*-<lacuna>*tābhimāno* (cf. 840.2).

by Ravana's words as suitor to Janaka (from *Mahaviracharita*) explaining the social profit the king would derive in giving him Sita in marriage. The entire literary work, for Bhoja, is structured in accordance with these four life-goals. For each one of the four forms of Passion a different variety of dramatic mode (*vritti*), costume style (*pravritti*), and compositional technique (*riti*) is to be employed.⁵⁴ Most important, a different kind of protagonist (*nayaka*) incarnates each of the four kinds of Passion. What makes us call a hero a hero is the fact of his possessing "continuity" or "stability" of character (*dhairyam*). "This is a mental attribute (*chittadharma*) that keeps the senses from perturbation. When it is present, despite his many virtues (as for instance his caste [*jati*], which could be a source of pride, *garva* [1083]), arrogance (*utseka*) and the like do not arise at all." Bhoja goes on to define the four kinds of firmness that characterise the different heroes. In the case of the dignified hero, his kind of firmness makes for the absence of arrogance in the event of success; of anguish in the event of grief; of sadness in the event of tragedy; he never violates *dharma* out of passion, he strives for virtuous conduct, abhors vile things, shows forbearance even when he has the power to act, is patient with those who stray in error. The firmness of the energetic hero makes for pride in the event of success, anguish in the event of grief, despondency in the

event of failure, the readiness even to oppose *dharma* because of passion (1108), and so on.⁵⁵ What is important to register here is not simply Bhoja's well-known fascination for formal analytical structures that are elegant in their symmetry but ultimately empty (the normal scholarly response). The point of all this – and Bhoja's full exposition demonstrates this – is that the varieties of Passion that make up literature, and the varieties of heroes that embody them, are all to be understood principally under the rubric of moral agency. That the hero is conceived of as moral agent, indeed nothing but moral agent, finds its most pointed expression when Bhoja discusses the narrative relationship of hero to antihero, a topic on which there had long been some uncertainty in the Sanskrit critical discourse.

One of the double figures of sound and sense, *ubhayalamkara* (728.11) is termed by Bhoja "adherence to the two ways" (*mārgadvayānuvartanam*). This, he explains, "makes reference to a certain literary convention followed by great poets" regarding hero and antihero. Its basis is Dandin's old prescription, which Bhoja goes on to cite:

The naturally agreeable procedure is when the poet, having first established the protagonist's virtues, has him overcome the antagonist. However, it enhances the hero's achievement if the

⁵⁴ For *dharma*, *bharati vritti*, *paurastya pravritti*, *panchali riti* (1080); for *artha*: *arabhati vritti*, *udhrama-gadhi pravritti*, and *gaudiya riti* (1106); for *kama*, *kaishiki vritti*, *dakshinatya pravritti*, and *vaidarbhi riti* (p. 1144); for *moksha*, *sattviki vritti*, *avantya pravritti*, and *latiya riti* (1178).

⁵⁵ SP 917 (cf. 746.10 and 1083) for the general account of *dhairya*; the four heroic types are discussed on pp. 1083, 1108, 1145, and 1180 respectively.

antagonist he defeats has also been shown to be of high birth, brave, learned and the like, and this brings the reader pleasure.⁵⁶

This contrasts with Bhamaha's position that the poet should not, in an attempt to elevate his hero, establish the antagonist's high birth, bravery, and learning before he is destroyed. For it is futile to describe and praise a character at the beginning of a work if he is not going to be present throughout the narrative and win in the end. Here is how Bhoja adjudicates the dispute:

It may be asked, Is the enemy whom the hero is going to destroy a virtuous or a flawed man? What difference does that make? Well, if he is flawed, his flaws are sufficient cause of his destruction. It is no achievement of manly effort to push a man into the water when he is sitting on a riverbank ready to crumble. As [Kautilya] says, "Like a log eaten by termites a royal family with undisciplined princes will break apart the moment it is attacked." If, on the other hand, the enemy is virtuous he should not in fact be destroyed.⁵⁷ For who would place any stock in acquiring virtues if even a virtuous man is shown to be destroyed? Furthermore, if both the hero and his enemy are equally virtuous, then it would be necessary to specify some hard and fast cause for the victory of the one and the defeat of the other – but [given their equality, *ex hypothesi*] what could that be other than fate? And

if success is brought about by fate, then the hero would be engaging in no manly effort, and there would be no difference between such a hero and his antagonist. The answer to this is, first, that literary texts are meant to provide moral instruction (*vidhiniṣedhavyutpattiphalatvāt prabandhānām*). In the *Rāmāyaṇa* and similar works, by the poet's showing the pre-eminence of a virtuous man and the destruction of a flawed man, we are being taught to act like Rāma and not like Rāvaṇa: As Rāma obeyed his father's order and despite being exiled to the forest achieved ultimate victory, whereas Rāvaṇa, though he was capable of conquering the three worlds, was destroyed because he had lusted after another man's wife, so will it turn out for others. Such is the moral instruction of this text, and of other literary works, courtly epics and the like, composed in the same spirit. As for the other questions – i.e., what pre-eminence could accrue to a hero shown to destroy a flawed enemy who would be brought down as a matter of course; and who would place any stock in acquiring virtues if even a virtuous man is shown to be destroyed? – my answer is as follows: The antagonist's flaws are not described in connection with [the hero's] manly effort, nor his virtues as a grounds for his destruction. Quite the contrary, his flaws are described as the grounds for his destruction, and his virtues in order to magnify the hero's pre-eminence. And the grounds for the

⁵⁶ *Kavyadarśha* 1.21-22; cf. Ratnashri, who makes it clear that Dandin accepts the *prakaradvayam* (14).

⁵⁷ Hereafter (SP 741.9-11) is printed what to my eyes is a clear dittography (from *nāyakasya . . . na doṣaḥ*). I conjecture: *tasyānucchedyatvāt* followed by *ko hi*. For *puruṣārthaviṣayatvena* (line 20) we should read *puruṣakāra*.

antagonist's destruction is his violation of social norms. Thus in the *purāṇas*, we see that antagonists like Hiraṇyakaśipu, who had acquired great power by worshipping the gods, were destroyed because of their cosmic evilness. The pre-eminence they possess owing to their high birth, bravery, learning, becomes in turn a source of pre-eminence for the hero who defeats them. (SP 741.5ff.)

This position, which for the first time a literary critic has argued out in any detail, is fundamental to the entire tradition of reading and writing Sanskrit literature, to the very end of its creative history, when Jagannatha returns to the question under the rubric of faults relating to *rasa*, arguing that the greatness of the protagonist must also be established directly, not just indirectly as a consequence of defeating someone great (RG 62-63). And the greatness of the hero is not just an aesthetic condition, but a social and a moral one.

* * *

The social thus impinges on Sanskrit literature and literary theory at every possible level. Aesthetic suggestion presupposes and reproduces social knowledge of, and correspondingly assent to, a structure of social action, and without this knowledge suggestion itself often remains all but incomprehensible. The emotional experience coded in the literary text works homologously. As the category of false feelings serves to

highlight, aesthetic sentiment becomes intelligible only against a broader discourse on social sentiment. Characters act the way they do, and we may discriminate among their actions, only by a theory of socially valid and invalid emotions. That the ability of Sanskrit thinkers to theorise the social ground was completely constrained in the case of suggestion, partially so in the case of sentiment, seems to have been due, at least to some extent, to the language-philosophical and theological turn of criticism in the last quarter of the first millennium.

By contrast, the work of Bhojaraja, the last great representative of the tradition before this development became normalised, illustrates just how self-consciously literary theory could recapitulate social theory. Literature has totalisable meaning, its meaning is Passion, and Passion for its part is something understood within a conceptual framework that is entirely social-moral: that of the four life-goals, which, as Kenneth Burke might have put it, offer the strategies for action that have direct bearing on matters of human welfare. And Bhoja shows us, too, that only by going through theory, and doing so historically, can we go beyond it, to see that literature in India was conceived of not only as verbal icon or metaphysical experience, but also and eminently – even when denied – as social practice, indeed, equipment for living (Burke 296, 304).

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Abhinavagupta and the Concept of Ignorance in Kashmir Shaivism

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IGNORANCE IS A TRUTH that all human beings perceive in their life in this world. All schools of Indian philosophical thought take cognisance of its existence in man and discuss its nature as they see it, recognising that ignorance is universally perceived to be the cause of man's bondage in his mundane life. A brief survey of the conceptualisation of ignorance by some representative orthodox schools of Indian philosophy on the nature of ignorance will help in assessing the unique contribution made to the subject by the most illustrious exponent of Kashmir Shaivism, Abhinavagupta. We shall begin our study with an examination of how the Nyaya and Vaisesika schools conceived it, because these two schools have been assigned the lowest position in the hierarchy of the schools of Indian philosophy by a well-known Advaita Shaiva writer, Kshemaraja, in his *Pratyabbijnabridayam* (sutra 8), where he says: *tadbhumikāḥ sarvadarśana sthitayah*, "the positions of the various systems of philosophy are only that." The Nyaya-Vaisesika writers conceptualise ignorance to be merely negation or absence of Knowledge in the percipient subject. Thus, ignorance is, in their view, a negative concept which can be eliminated by the acquisition of knowledge: *duḥkha-janma-pravritti-doṣa mityājñānānam uttarāpaye* (*Nyayasutra* 1.1.2, and the *Nyayabhashya* thereon, 15). The Samkhya and the Patanjali Yoga schools look upon ignorance as the resultant of the lack of discriminatory wisdom (*vivekajñana*) in the percipient subject between the sentient (*chetana*) *Purusha* and the insentient material (*jada*) *Prakriti* (cf. SK vs. 64, p. 476 ff, and Vachaspati Misra's commentary thereon). The lack of discriminatory knowledge between these two

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ultimate components of creation, spirit and matter, produces confusion in the mind of the percipient subject, culminating in the false superimposition of the characteristics of the material *Prakriti* on the spiritual *Purusha*. It is obvious that the dualistic Samkhya-Yoga school's theory of ignorance is positive in character, as opposed to the pluralistic Nyaya-Vaisesika viewpoint, and that ignorance can be destroyed by developing its opposite, discriminatory wisdom, between the two, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. The Shankara Vedantins conceive of two forms of ignorance, namely, cosmic ignorance (*samasti* or *mula ajnana*), and individual ignorance (*vyasti* or *tula ajnana*), though their nature and content are held to be identical in essence: *idamajñānam samṣṭi-vyāṣṭi-abhiprāyeṇa ekamanekam ca vyavabryate* (VS 76). Cosmic ignorance plays a crucial role in the manifestation of the phenomenal world, while individual ignorance leads to a distorted vision of Reality, thereby causing bondage. Ignorance has been described by the Advaita Vedantins as neither existent (*sat*) on account of its being sublated by the dawn of true knowledge in the individual being, nor non-existent (*asat*), as it is experienced by all individuals on the mundane plane; it, therefore, is indescribable (*anirvachaniya*) in positive or negative terms: *ajñānam sadasadbhyam-nirvacanīyam triguṇatmakam jñana-virodhī-bhāva-rūpam* (ibid 73). Ignorance here has only a phenomenal existence; as soon as one succeeds in elevating oneself to the trans-phenomenal level, ignorance disappears from the experiential horizon of the individual being once and for all.

Against this background of the views of the other orthodox schools, let us now examine the Advaita Shaiva concept of ignorance as conceived by the Advaita Shaiva writers of Kashmir. The earliest references to the concept of ignorance are the two aphorisms in the *Shivasutra* revealed to Vasugupta, the founder of the Advaita Shaiva school in Kashmir. The two identically-worded *sutras* read thus: *jñanam bandhab* (SS 3.2). Kshemaraja, Abhinavagupta's foremost disciple, says that the word *jñanam* actually signifies in this context "vitiated," or limited, knowledge, which is tantamount to ignorance (*ajnana*) (SSV 3.2). This ignorance lies at the root of the bondage of the individual being. When he is enveloped by defilement (*mala*), technically called *anavamala* (i.e. *mala* caused by the limitation imposed on the self by the Supreme Lord), then the individual does not experience his true divine nature on account of his being limited and contracted by this self-created limitation or *anavamala*. This lack of knowledge about his true nature is labelled ignorance.

Kshemaraja interprets the word *jñanam* as it occurs in the *Shivasutra* (3.2) as signifying the knowledge of the self produced in the *chitta* (internal sense organ, equivalent to *antahkarana*) in the form of its modification (*chitta-vritti*) (SSV 128). Since the *chitta* is universally acknowledged as of the nature of the three *gunas*, pleasure (*sattva*), pain (*rajas*) and stupefaction (*tamas*), the knowledge produced in it bears all the characteristics of empirical knowledge. For instance, it implies the experience of duality between subject and object, as also infinite multiplicity. The

knowledge arising in the *chitta* involving two distinct poles of experience, the knower and the known, is instrumental in the experient's bondage. He is then subject to transmigration in the world. Kshemaraja quotes a verse from the *Tantrasadbhava*, now lost, in his commentary, the *Shivasutra-vimarshini*: "Confined to *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* (the three *gunas*), and knowing only that (object of knowledge) which the senses can seize, the embodied being wanders about in the world, moving from one body to another" (ibid).

Abhinavagupta adds another dimension to the Advaita Shaiva conception of ignorance by postulating two distinct kinds of ignorance as existing on two different levels in the personality of embodied beings. These are spiritual ignorance and intellectual ignorance, or *paurusha ajnana* and *bauddha ajnana* respectively. He describes the salient features in the *Tantraloka* (Sadananda in VS 1.22-23) and the *Tantrasara* (*ahnika* 1). According to him, as the Supreme Lord Paramashiva imposes limitations (*sankocha*) on Himself of His free will (*svecchaya*) to become the Universe consisting of an infinite number of subjects (*pramata*), objects of experience (*prameya*), etc., which indeed are only His self-manifest forms on the mundane plane. His self-experience of His absolute nature (*vishvahirna rupa*), in the form of "absolute" I-experience, or *purnabatma*, ceases. This self-experience of the Supreme Lord is thus named because it expresses his fullest nature (*paripurna svabhava*). When the Supreme Lord is said to voluntarily assume limitation (*sankocha*) to become the

world, a split is created, as it were, in his self-experience (*svatma-paramarsha*) as a result of which he begins experiencing Himself in the first instance as the experient or subject symbolised by *aham* (I-experience), and the void (*shunya*), and then subsequently as the experient or subject (*aham*) and the object of experience (*idam*, or not-self appearing to fill up the void or *shunya*, as it were). All this happens in the course of the Supreme Lord's involution (*avaroha*) as the Universe.

It is held that the notion of not-self (*idam*) appears for the first time in His self-experience (*paramarsha*), which then is experienced by him only as His self-extended form (*sphara*), not different from him. His "truncated" self-experience, as *aham* (I-experience) instead of *purnabatma* (integral I-experience), caused by His voluntary act of self-limitation (*atma-sankocha*) resulting in the appearance of *idam* or not-self in the background of I-experience, Abhinavagupta designates by the term *paurusha ajnana* (spiritual ignorance). Abhinava defines *paurusha ajnana* as *atmani anatmabodha*, or the experience of not-self (*anatma uridam*) in the self (*atma*). The locus of this self-experience is the percipient subject's mirror of consciousness (*chitta-darpana*), with the consciousness serving as the reflecting medium for all his self-experiences. Since this self-experience is produced prior to the creation of *chitta* or intellect during the manifestation of the world, it is held to be beyond the reach of the *chitta* or the intellect. Abhinavagupta, therefore, posits that *paurusha ajnana*, or spiritual ignorance,

being an offshoot of the Supreme Lord's act of assuming limitation in the course of His self-manifestation as the universe, cannot be eradicated by a limited embodied individual through his personal efforts in the form of practice of spiritual discipline (*sadhana*). Ignorance can be destroyed only by the Supreme Lord through the infusion of His Grace into His form of the embodied individual, technically called *Shaktipata*.

The second kind of ignorance, *bauddha ajnana* (intellectual ignorance), is created in the intellect or *buddhi* upon the Supreme Lord's being enveloped by *maya*, and residual impressions of *karma* floating in the sphere of *maya*, called *mayiyamala* and *karmamala*, in the course of His self-manifestation as the Universe. Abhinavagupta describes *bauddha ajnana* as experience in the form of Self in the not-self (*anatmani-atmabodha*). It is said that the Supreme Lord, existing on the mundane level in the form of a spiritual monad following His act of self-limitation, is enveloped by *mayiyamala* (defilement in the form of *maya*), with his self-experience as pure subject (*aham*) becoming completely concealed, allowing only his experience of not-self (*idam*) to remain unaffected by the veil of *maya* (*mayiyamala*). This happens on the level just below the *shuddha vidya tattva* in the sphere of *maya*. A vacuum is created the self-experience of the subject once again after

eclipse of the I-experience (*aham*).

Since worldly transactions are not possible in the absence of a subject or agent, the Supreme Lord, in the course of his self-manifestation as the universe, creates the experience of the subject by superposing the experience of the empirical subject on the not-self (*idam* or *anatma*). As a consequence of this superimposition, ego-experience (*ahamkara*) is created, which takes place in the intellect of the embodied individual. Since the ego-experience is created on the mundane level solely for carrying out worldly transactions, Abhinavagupta treats it as a conceptual one (*vaikalpika*), with the intellect of the individual being its locus.

Abhinavagupta therefore holds intellectual ignorance responsible for the creation of ego-experience. As such, it cannot be got rid of until and unless the experience of the self in the real self (*atmani atmabodha*) arises in the intellect of the individual being. He calls this experience the spiritual knowledge (*paurusha jnana*) that arises in the spiritual seeker with the annihilation of *anavamala* as a consequence of infusion of Divine Grace, *Shaktipata*, in the embodied individual. The practice of spiritual discipline cannot accomplish this task. Hence, *Shaktipata*, or the descent of Divine Grace, is invested with so much importance by Advaita Shaiva writers, especially Abhinavagupta.

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Kashmir Shaivism: A Note

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KASHMIR SHAIVISM, ALSO CALLED monistic Shaivism or Trika, developed in the ninth century CE in the Kashmir valley and grew out of the vast corpus of the Shaivagama tradition. Around the beginning of this millennium, Kashmir was an important centre of both Hindu and Buddhist culture and learning. In particular, Kashmir was the home of numerous Tantric cults, both Hindu and Buddhist. The intellectual ethos of Kashmir played an important part not only in the development of Shaiva Tantra, but, equally, of the Vaishnava and Shakta Tantras. Kashmir, in this period, was post-Buddha, but pre-Shankara. The grammarian philosophers like Bhartrihari had already established the validity of *saguna brahman*, or ultimate reality, enriched by thought constructs and concepts. The intellectual activity of the Kashmir valley in the ninth century was crucial to the evolution of both Buddhism and Hinduism at this juncture in this history of the Indian civilisation. It was a period when the validity and usefulness of excessive rituals, popular among the masses, was being increasingly questioned by the elites. At the same time, there was the emergence of a sensuous, orgiastic, autochthonous culture. Any attempt at a fuller understanding of Kashmir Shaivism must take into account these antecedents.

While Kashmir Shaivism is rooted in sectarian Shaivism on the one hand and the Shaivagamas on the other, as a philosophical system it must be assessed and understood on its own. Despite its use of terms like Shiva and Shakti, Kashmir Shaivism should not be seen as a theistic system of philosophy. While no written records are available of early, or

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pre-Agamic sectarian Shaivism, it is a well-established fact that Shiva was considered a sectarian god in times prehistoric, as is evident from the seals of the Indus valley and the coins of the Shaka kings. The tradition at this time was entirely oral, and accurate records are therefore not available. Patanjali in his *Mahabhashya*, composed in the second century BC, refers to itinerant Shaiva ascetics who wore animal skins and carried an iron lance. A number of Shaiva cults flourished in Kashmir and among them were Shaivasiddhanta, Vamatantra and Bhairavatantra. In addition, there were a number of Kaula cults dedicated to the worship of the mother goddess. All these cults must also be seen as precursors of Kashmir Shaivism.

The various Agamas grew out of autochthonous sources and developed independently from, though not rejecting, the classical or Nigamic stream of the Vedas, Puranas and the Epics. Even though pejorative references to the Agamas are found in the Vedas, a symbiosis and syncreticism between the Agamic and the Nigamic traditions probably occurred. In the *Kularnava Tantra*, the six Nigamic systems of philosophy are described as parts of Shiva's body, indicating a respectful acceptance of the non-Agamic systems of philosophy. It is important to note that the earthy and life-affirming attitude of the Agamas was to leave its imprint on the epistemology of Kashmir Shaivism. The Agamas abhor and, equally, discourage both stark voidness and bland oneness, and strenuously promote diversity, multiplicity and differentiation, for that is the nature of

the mundane world. The initial acceptance of the duality between man and his world, between subject and object, in the Agamic world-view, became the cornerstone of the edifice of Kashmir Shaivism that was to follow.

The Shaivagamas flourished originally in *madhyadesa*, in present day Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and only later spread to the south and to the Kashmir valley. Unlike the Nigamas, the Agamas remained in the oral form for a long time, and it was in this form that they proliferated, and, because of this, many Agamas were lost. It was not until about the sixth century CE that they were committed to writing. The Shaivagamas were concerned largely with ritual rather than with metaphysics, and were preoccupied with the ritual worship of Shiva. It is this corpus of the predominantly oral Shaivagamas that constitutes the fountainhead and substance of both the monistic and dualistic Shaivism, and the earthy, world-affirming ambience of these Agamas is indelibly stamped on Kashmir Shaivism. Kashmir Shaivism accepts twenty-eight Agamas as sources and among these are included *Malinivijata*, *Svacchanda*, *Netra*, *Vijnanabhairava*, *Paratrimshika* and *Kularnava*. Out of this rich corpus of the Shaivagamas was to evolve, over a period of two hundred years, from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, the refined philosophical system called Kashmir Shaivism.

The central text of Kashmir Shaivism is the *Shivasutra*. Like the *Vedas*, it is *apaurusheya*, or thought to be divinely composed, and revealed to Vasugupta, who is considered the first

preceptor of this system of philosophy. Little is known of Vasugupta and his life. There is evidence that he adorned the court of King Avantivarman, who reigned over Kashmir between the years 855 and 883. Vasusupta was probably a Kashmiri brahmin who lived on the slopes of the Mahadeva mountain, on the banks of the river Harwan, close to the Shalimar gardens near present-day Srinagar. It is said that Shiva appeared to Vasugupta in a dream and asked him to climb a mountain and find a rock upon which was inscribed a secret.

When Vasugupta awoke the next day, he went to the rock, which rolled over at his mere touch, and found the *Shivasutra* inscribed on it. The legend is another way of deflecting the question of the actual historical authorship of a sacred text, thereby giving it a divine status and more credibility, a practice not uncommon in the Indian tradition. From the *Shivasutra* were to flow two foundational texts, the *Spandakarika* and the *Ishvarapratyabhijna-karika*. These two core texts, and the numerous commentaries written on them, form the corpus of the literature of Kashmir Shaivism, and divide the system into the Spanda and the Pratyabhijna branches, which have remained largely independent, though they share much in common and deeply influenced each other.

If Vasugupta was the father of Kashmir Shaivism, the high priest of this system was Abhinavagupta, who with his prolific writings, refined the system into a major philosophical school and brought it to its climax. He lived from the middle of the tenth century into the eleventh century, and

dissociated himself not only from the masses but, equally, from the royalty of Kashmir. He was an intellectual elite and lived in partial solitude, in the company of his family and disciples, and this lifestyle was to characterise his writings and also, inevitably, to mark Kashmir Shaivism indelibly. Besides contributing richly to Kashmir Shaivism, Abhinavagupta made significant contributions to the *rasa* doctrine. The emergence of *shanta rasa*, or the sentiment of serenity, as the ninth *rasa* is attributed to him. It is not accidental that aesthetic experience and the metaphysics of Kashmir Shaivism are closely related, for Abhinavagupta wrote extensively on both.

The Pratyabhijna system, or the doctrine of re-cognition, represents the flowering of Shaiva monism. For Utpaladeva, the author of the *Ishvara-pratyabhijna-karika*, the highest experience of enlightenment is the realisation of one's real identity, and that this is no different from that of Shiva. There is, the Pratyabhijna doctrine postulates, an initial amnesia and, later, a remembrance of one's real identity. This is similar to the Vedantic concept of ultimate knowledge arising out of the initial ignorance being dispelled. However, here the similarity ends, for, unlike Vedanta, Pratyabhijna does not accept *maya*, or illusion, in its epistemology. The Pratyabhijna canons give many examples of this phenomenon of amnesia and remembering. One such example is that of a young woman betrothed by her parents to a handsome young man. She falls in love with him after hearing of his many qualities even though she has never seen him. One day,

they meet accidentally, but the woman does not recognise him, until she finds that he has all the qualities that she had imagined, re-cognises him and then finds her love fulfilled.

The *Spandakarika*, unlike the *Shivasutra*, was not a revelation, but the exact authorship of this work remains a vexing problem. While some have suggested that it was written by Vasugupta himself, the bulk of the evidence suggests that it was written by a disciple of Vasugupta's called Kallatabhatta. While the doctrine of Pratyabhijna emphasises the importance of repeated cognitions or affirmation as an epistemic step, the Spanda doctrine asserts that consciousness is vibrant and pulsating, capable of activity, unlike the dormant and passive *brahman* of Shankara.

Even though the Pratyabhijna and the Spanda systems are didactically different, one complements the other, and they must be integrally understood as two streams of Kashmir Shaivism.

Reality for Kashmir Shaivism is three tiered. Ultimate reality, also called Parama Shiva, transcendent Shiva, *annutara*, Bhairava or *parasamvit*, corresponds to the *brahman* of the Upanishads. Like the *brahman*, *parasamvit* cannot be intellectually discoursed or grasped by ratiocination; in this respect Kashmir Shaivism shares the Idealism of Vedanta. However unlike the *brahman* of Shankara's *advaita* Vedanta, *parasamvit* is not passive, but throbs with creativity, a process called *spandana*. Parama Shiva is not merely *prakasha* or a passive mass of light, but equally *vimarsha* or energy, it is *prakashavimarshamaya*. Kashmir Shaivism postulates that Parama Shiva

contains the entire universe, pulsating within it, just as the seed of the mighty *nyagrodha* potentially contains the entire tree. At the immanent level, the transcendent *prakashavimarshamaya* splits into *prakasha* and *vimarsha*, Shiva and Shakti, *aham* and *idam*, I and this, subject and object, held together in pulsating, dynamic harmony. This level of reality is best illustrated by the image of the *ardhanarishvara*. The lowest level of reality is one where Shiva and Shakti, the *aham* and the *idam*, are split into two. The three stages of reality are not only integrally related one to the other, the lower being a reflection, an *abbasa*, of the higher, but equally importantly, Shiva and Shakti are never metaphysically divided. There is thus both a vertical and horizontal integrality. At every level there is differentiation into subject and object, *aham* and *idam*, but this differentiation is based in, and unified by, the non-duality of consciousness. *Abbasa*, while allowing immanence and differentiation of a transcendent reality, shares none of the illusory features of the *maya* of Shankara.

The reality of *abbasa* is affirmed at three levels. In the first place, appearance as appearance is real; secondly, appearance as self-projection is real, and finally, appearance, inasmuch as it provides a value, is real. The onus in the dialectic about reality, for the Kashmir Shaivite, is always on the subject and not on the object, with objective experience merely reinforcing subjective reality.

Kashmir Shaivism is therefore sometimes referred to as *abbasavada*. Several metaphysical principles follow from the concept of *abbasa*. First and

foremost, *abhasa* affirms the reality of the manifested world without negating the transcendence and non-duality of the Absolute. *Abhasa* further allows differentiation without duality, or unity in diversity, *bheda abheda*, and affirms the ultimate reality and value of creation, without compromising the integrity of the creator. The Shaiva *shastras* explain the significance of *abhasa* with the analogy of one flame lighting another, where the first flame remains intact when the second flame arises, with both flames being identical in essential nature, though manifestly distinguishable. The *Chandogya-Upanishad* hints at the concept of *abhasa*, though it does not elaborate upon it, when it declares *purnam adah purnam idam*. The concept of *abhasa* is central to Kashmir Shaiva epistemology, and it enables one to understand creativity and the realisation of what is created as an integral epistemic activity. It is the concept of *abhasa* that signifies for the Kashmir Shaivas that the world- manifestation arises out of a free and spontaneous creative activity, or *spanda*, in the Absolute. Furthermore, *abhasa* connotes that creativity is the spontaneous self-expression, self-projection, *svabhava* of the Absolute: the created world displays the very nature of the Creator, just as an art object reflects the essential nature of the artist. *Abhasavada* therefore gives ultimate value to creativity and freedom, understood epistemically.

Svantantrya, or freedom, is the very essence of Kashmir Shaivism, and that which differentiates it yet again from Advaita Vedanta. True knowledge consists not only of *bodha* or consciousness but *kartatva* or activity.

The gaining of knowledge is therefore an active process, not a passive one.

If reality as posited by Kashmir Shaivism is three tiered, its epistemology also operates on three levels. The first stage is that of *aham* or self-assertion. This self-knowledge is abstract and very limited, devoid of organised thought-constructs, and is inward and solipsistic, and incapable of expansion unless it is fired by a desire to expand. With this desire, the epistemic process progresses to the next stage, of *savikalpa jnana* or knowledge with thought-constructs, and that is of *aham idam*, or the subject identifying itself fully and undertaking a complete awareness with the object of cognition. In this intermediate step, or *aham idam*, the subject comes to a full and complete understanding and realisation of the object. The third and final stage of knowledge is of a universalised I-consciousness, *aham eva vishvarupam*, where the subject internalises not only the object of immediate cognition, but through that richly cognitive experience, expands its consciousness to include the entire universe itself. This final step in self-awareness is also called *shuddhavidya*. The cardinal feature of the epistemology of Kashmir Shaivism is that at no step, unlike the *advaita* Vedanta of Shankara, is there any negation; instead, there is but affirmation and celebration. There is no *maya* or illusion or unreality, but merely affirmation, from a lower to a higher stage of reality. No level of experience is abandoned as untrue, no type of experience is negated; every experience, on the other hand, is included and transcended in the higher level of

experience, every level of *abhāsa* is used to activate the otherwise passive self into a state of cognitive alertness and awareness.

The concept of *abhāsa* also highlights the role of *vimarśha* or Shakti. Shiva, unlike the *brahman* of Advaita Vedānta, has two sides, passive and active, Shiva and Shakti. It is Shakti that energises an otherwise passive and dormant Shiva into a full and joyous self-realisation. This type of consciousness or higher realisation is also called reflexive consciousness, and *vimarśha* is the active agent responsible for that. Kashmir Shaivites point out that *vimarśha* acts spontaneously and with freedom; it possesses not an act of will, but play, not the expression of a lack, but the display of fullness, its action termed *kriyā* or *spandana*, meaning spontaneous and free action rather than *karma* or volitional action. In recognising *vimarśha* as a part of the immanent godhead, the doctrine of Kashmir Shaivism not only ensured that the dormant, somnolent, solipsistic, inward Shiva would be aroused, but also opened the door for Shiva towards making objective realisation a form of higher experience. *Vimarśha* is no *māyā* or illusion; it is epistemically real and dynamically vibrant.

Agamacharyas, more than other philosophers, have used the Sanskrit alphabet to find in it a paradigm of the epistemology of Kashmir Shaivism. The letter "a" is considered Shiva and the letter "b" Parvati and every consonant and vowel is then given an appropriate status and energy. The mythic marriage of Shiva and Parvati and its many literary and visual artistic depictions

provide an equally engaging and beautiful paradigm of Kashmir Shaivism. Briefly, as the Puranic myth goes, Shiva meditates in solitude. Parvati, a born *yogini*, led on by her father Parvat, approaches Shiva, only to be initially rebuffed by him. However, after much penance and repeated encounters and the awakening of desire by Kama, Shiva awakens and is moved by Parvati's beauty and tenacity. They have a romantic dalliance, and Shiva marries Parvati. In his delight he then dances the dance of bliss, the *ananda-tandava*, in which he demonstrates and realises his *viśvvarūpa* or cosmic form. This Puranic myth, which is celebrated religiously by Shaivas, has inspired artists over the millennia, to depict this in poetry and drama, bronze and stone, painting and dance. Shiva's solitude is the stage of *aham*, his romantic dalliance with Parvati is the stage of *aham idam*, and then his final realisation and *anandatandava* is the stage of *aham eva viśvvarūpam*.

An equally beautiful visual paradigm of Kashmir Shaivism epistemology is that of the image of the *ardhanarishvara*, the androgyne image of Shiva and Parvati. Not only are Shiva and Parvati held in dynamic harmony but, importantly, Parvati holds a mirror in her left hand. This mirror, however, is not for Parvati's use, and is therefore not an expression of her vanity, but held up for Shiva, who sees his own face in it. It is when he sees himself in the mirror of Parvati that Shiva is wonderstruck. Shiva's lustful cognition and romance turns into amazement. Knowledge, according to Kashmir Shaivism, must progress by celebration and affirmation,

arising from a sense of wonder, and by repeated cognitions, must end in the subjective realisation of wonder, for it is in that moment of wonder, *adbhuta*, that the world appears one and undivided. The epistemology of Kashmir Shaivism achieves this state of non-duality not through negation, or by a nihilistic turning back from the world, as does Shankara's Advaita Vedanta, but by a joyous affirmation. It is repeated cognitions on the part of Shiva that remove any trace of duality from Shiva's cognition of Parvati. This is the essence of *pratyabbijna* or cognition through recognition.

The perfect object of cognition for Kashmir Shaivites is an art object as, in this system, aesthetic experience is considered the highest form of experience, and one that leads easily to Shiva knowledge or transcendent knowledge. If the prepared aesthete, or the perfect subject, is Shiva, the perfect art object is none other than Parvati, the embodiment of perfect sensual beauty. The aesthete, like Shiva, must embark upon a full and complete understanding of the art object, bringing into play not only his *samskaras*, or latent psychic impressions of previous births, but equally his *shiksha* or training as an aesthete. Driven by an intent desire, the aesthete undertakes to establish the *artha* or meaning of the art object. Establishing the meaning of the art object is an indispensable though intermediate step, for without it the aesthetic experience can only be a superficial, hedonistic, psychological art activity. The aesthete needs to explore not only the *sakshat artha* or surface meaning, but equally the *paroksha artha*

or deeper or hidden meanings of the art object. In so doing, the aesthete becomes responsive to the layer upon layer of meanings that are embodied in the art object. Both aesthetic form, or *rupa*, and aesthetic emotion, or *rasa*, are fully investigated at this stage. It is here that *rasa* is tasted, and it is here that *rupaprajna*, or the inner sense of form, is revealed to the aesthete. The suggested meanings, or resonances, revealed by the art object are grasped by direct intuitive insights at this stage, these insights becoming more profound as they move through the resonances. It is at this stage that cognition becomes fully *savikalpa* or intellectualised. It is here that the *gathas* and the *kathas*, the stories and songs associated with the art object, have their full import; it is here that the aesthetic *pramanas* of the art object are translated into their metaphysical counterpart, and the suggestiveness of *dhvani*, or resonant meaning, comes into full play. This is the function of *vimarsha* or Shakti. *Savikalpa pratyaksha* is an open-ended, multi-layered, outward looking, determinate cognitive step, brought to its fruition through repeated and penetrating cognitive activity, enriching the epistemic experience. In it, as it were, Shiva meditates with his eyes open and not closed; rejecting nothing, for it is a time for sensual affirmation or *bhoga*. The art object is relished in its entirety. This is the stage of Shiva's romantic dalliance with Parvati, of the subject embracing the object, reminiscent of Shiva's *alingan* or embrace in the many images of Shiva and Parvati. It is *vimarsha* or objective affirmation that distinguishes Kashmir Shaivism from Advaita Vedanta. Not

only does *vimarsha* mandate an acceptance and affirmation of the objective world through the process of *bhoga*, but equally, *vimarsha* leads to higher realisation without sacrificing any of its objective content. In other words, Kashmir Shaivism shows how an initial *savikalpa pratyaksha* or determinate cognition can be transformed into ultimate *nirvikalpa jnana* or non-cognitive awareness. Kashmir Shaivism retains its Idealistic stance in giving the highest status to *nirvikalpa jnana*. It is because of this that aesthetic activity can be considered a form of yoga. At no step in the epistemology of Kashmir Shaivism is the objectivity of the experience lost. The art object, in aesthetic experience, is not only instrumental but inherent in the ultimate experience, not to be discarded or rejected, but carried to its utmost level of transcendent joy and knowledge. In this respect Kashmir Shaivism parts company with the Vishishta Advaita of Ramanuja. For the Vishishta Advaita, with its temple centred and ritualistic world-view, also advocates contemplation and worship of sacred images and encourages aesthetic activity. However, for the Vishishta Advaitin, the worship of these images is a mere boat to be used for crossing the river, to be given up only when the shore is reached.

While *vimarsha* leading to *bhoga* is the cardinal feature of Kashmir Shaivism, *bhoga* has potential for a hedonistic, materialistic interpretation and misunderstanding. A clear example of this is the interpretation by the *vamamargins* or the left-handed Tantrics, for whom the *panchamakaras*, or the five "m's" become the right objects of

contemplation, and these are *matsya*, *mamsa*, *madira*, *mudra* and *mithuna* or fish, meat, wine, gestures and sexual activity. It is this misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Kashmir Shaivism that has led to some ambiguity and disrespect of Kashmir Shaivism. The Kashmir Shaivite process of sensual affirmation is also called *bhairavamudra*, which is defined as the technique of inner absorption with external expansion of the senses, or meditation with the eyes open and not closed. The Kashmir Shavite concepts of *bhoga* and *bhairavamudra* show the process of removing the duality between the object and the subject, between Parvati and Shiva, making the object ontologically and epistemologically a part of the subject. Unlike the subjective Idealism of Shankara's Advaita Vedanta, this process does not efface the identity of the object, but merely brings it together with the subject. Kashmir Shaivism is therefore sometimes also called Realistic Idealism, to distinguish it from other Idealist schools of philosophy. *Bhoga* ensures that subject and object, Shiva and Parvati, will not be adrift like two logs in the ocean, but will, like the *ardhanarishvara*, be two equal parts of a dynamic whole, a biune unity.

If the epistemic process of *bhoga* or sensual affirmation leads to the complete understanding of the object, the Kashmir Shavism concept of *visranti* or stillness ensures that this contemplation will not be hedonistic. A true *bhoga* must lead to *visranti*, a state of rest, not to be understood in its physical or psychological sense but to be seen in the light of its spiritual and epistemic implications. *Visranti* is when the

object of contemplation is brought to rest on the cognising subject. *Visranti* not only prevents attention from becoming runaway and hedonistic, but also ensures that sensual activity is led towards a higher and transcendent state of knowledge. It is in this process of *visranti* that the quest for *artha* or meaning is brought to an end and the mind wanders no more in search of meanings. At this stage there arises the fullest delight or *ananda* in the restful subject. This is akin to the *samadhi* of Patanjali but with one significant difference. The aesthetic *visranti* of Kashmir Shaivism is not content-free but content-rich. It is *samadhi* with the eyes open and not closed. This stage of rest corresponds to the periods of quietitude and asceticism that Shiva is given to, much to the dismay of Parvati's mother. Upto this point, aesthetic appreciation has been an intellectual or material activity. At the stage of *visranti* it takes a leap and becomes supra-rational or spiritual and becomes qualitatively different. It is at this stage of epistemic rest that the aesthete can rightly exclaim "*Shivoham*," "I am Shiva," one with the entire universe. *Visranti* is the stage of universalised I-consciousness or *aham vimarsha*, also called *shuddhavidya*.

An important part of any philosophical system is the question of epistemic error, its recognition and prevention. According to Abhinava, error in this system of philosophy is *apurnakhyati* or incomplete knowledge, and the source of the error is neither in the cognising subject nor in the object of cognition. In Shankara's Advaita Vedanta, the object, namely the world,

is problematic because it is considered to be *maya* or illusion. In the Buddhist world-view, there is no permanent subject and postulating a subject is the source of the error. However, in Kashmir Shaivism, the source of error is neither in the object nor in the subject, but in the *pramana* or modes of knowledge. Error arises from a defective *pratyaksha* or perception and equally from a defective *anumana* or inference. Problems with these modes of cognition lead to incomplete penetration of the object by the subject. According to Abhinavagupta, the prevention of error lies in *vimarshabala*, the strength of determinate cognition. In aesthetic experience, which is a paradigm of Shiva knowledge, it can be said that the source of the error is neither in the aesthete nor the art object. The truth-seeking aesthete must ensure that the *pramanas* of cognition are right and undertake a deep and penetrating understanding and realisation of the object. This emphasises not only repeated and sustained cognitions to avail oneself of the surface or *sakshat artha* of the art object, but also the importance of seeking and cognising the hidden or *paroksha artha* of the art object, for it is the latter *artha* that encourages a determinate cognition, which in turn eliminates erroneous cognition. Not to recognise the suggested and hidden meanings is the principal source of error in the epistemology of Kashmir Shaivism.

The undertaking of *atmajnana*, or self-knowledge, is yoga. The yoga of Kashmir Shaivism shares many of the basic postulates of Patanjali's yoga. It accepts *pranayama* or breath control,

dhyana or contemplation, *pratyahara* or restraint and *dharana* or concentration. However, it rejects *yama* or self-control. In its place it posits the concept of *satarka*, or the perfection of determinate or objective contemplation. According to Abhinavagupta, it is *satarka* that brings about self-recognition by uprooting the apparent distinction between the subject and the object, by grasping the true subjective nature of what appears to be objective. *Satarka* is the understanding that in every act of cognition, the subject projects himself into the object, so that objective experience is always a reflection of the subject. *Satarka* is the ability to bring subject and object together in *biune* unity. *Satarka* requires not just *jnana* or knowledge but *pratyabhijna* or knowledge through repeated cognitions, a concept beautifully illustrated by the mirror in Parvati's hand. The yoga of Kashmir Shaivism is therefore also a type of *jnana yoga* or yoga by

contemplation. For Abhinavagupta, yoga is nothing else but the realisation of the unity of one's self with Shiva.

Kashmir Shaivism advocates a life-affirming rather than a life-denying attitude. Its *advaita* is one of joyous affirmation and celebration, one of *iti iti*, it is this, and not one of *neti neti*, it is not this. It has no room for the *maya* of Shankara or the *anatma* or self-annihilation of Buddhism. There is neither rejection nor negation, either of the subject or the object, but the creation of a *biune* unity of subject and object, of unity in the midst of diversity, like the romantic union of Shiva and Parvati. For Kashmir Shaivites, the objective experience par excellence is aesthetic experience. The seeking out and undertaking of repeated aesthetic experiences, through the many art activities available in the tradition, becomes the life mission of Kashmir Shaivites. This is their *sadhana*, their spiritual endeavour.

Contributions for *Evam*

Evam: Forum on Indian Representations welcomes research papers, essays, articles, interviews, notes, reviews, and other publishable material that will enhance the study or understanding of India both as an actual place and as an accumulation of ideas. Given the plurality and heterogeneity of India, *Evam* is alert and open not only to a variety of topics but also to a diversity of perspectives and methodologies. Both critical and creative writing is welcome, though the latter must specifically have as its theme or subject some aspect of India.

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Ideally, each essay is expected to consider a well-defined issue or question, explore it purposefully, and clearly elucidate consequences or implications of such an enquiry.

Each contribution, by its passion and/or its lucidity, is also expected to engage an interested international audience. Manuscripts of varied length will be considered, but normally submissions should be between 3000 and 9000 words, inclusive of footnotes and works cited. Manuscripts may be submitted electronically to: evam@samvadindia.com or by mail to N-16/B Saket, New Delhi 110017, INDIA. Manuscripts will not be returned; authors are therefore requested to retain copies. Accepted submissions must be sent on diskettes or as attachments in any of the widely used word processing software. Illustrations/photographs and other visual material should be sent as high resolution files as attachments or on CDs. All manuscripts must be prepared in the MLA style. Indian words, especially those naturalised into English or frequently used, will not be transliterated or italicised. However, long passages or quotations from languages other than English should be transliterated and accompanied by translations. Each submission will be read by peers, whose identities will be withheld, but whose comments and suggestions may be passed on to the authors. Authors are therefore requested not to identify themselves in the body of the text, but only in a separate cover page, which should contain their postal and email addresses, institutional affiliations, and a brief biographical note. Authors submitting work simultaneously to other publications should clearly state this when offering anything to *Evam*.

Despite his immense scholarly accomplishments and spiritual genius, Abhinavagupta remains a stranger to most academics, including Indologists. This special issue of *Evam*, consecrated to Abhinavagupta, showcases some of the finest scholarship on him carried out over a twenty-year period.

The purpose is to restore his rightful place in India's intellectual traditions and in the larger cosmopolitan configurations of human thought. Our more profound aspiration is to trigger a fundamental reconsideration of Indian philosophy, especially of Abhinavagupta's role in shaping it.

It is hoped that this volume, which contains fresh translations, re-readings, and re-assessments of his contributions to the fields of dramaturgy, literary criticism, philosophy, musicology, and so on, will be welcomed not just by Abhinavagupta scholars but by teachers and students of Sanskrit, aesthetics, philosophy, Tantra, and literary studies worldwide.

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